

Loyalty Among Worlds

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Darrel Loyallitat, a shy, dependable teenage boy, gets a chance of a lifetime. He, Sasha, Anne, and Marcy, get teleported into a strange new world. Now he journeys with new friends, along with old ones. Darrel takes his experiences to heart, and learns that with his new abilities, he must find the courage to be dependable for himself. And make life changing choices as well.

Status: complete

Published: 2020-12-27

Updated: 2022-05-20

Words: 271738

Chapters: 71

Rated: Fiction K+ - Language: English - Genre: Adventure/Fantasy -
Characters: [OC, Anne] Sprig, Hop Pop - Reviews: 259 - Favs: 275 -
Follows: 266

Original source: <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/13779444/1/Loyalty-Among-Worlds>

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Prologue

I hope everyone is staying fresh after reading my Loud Splat Story. Because I'm back with an entirely new adventure. After reading Cowboy Alchemist's take on his Amphibia Fanfiction with his OC, I've decided to take a shot at making an OC fanfic myself. I may not be able to do every episode from the series, but I'm willing to give it a try.

Ever wonder what it would feel like to be one of the best? To be the shining cog of the clock, and keep time in check? To be the voice that speaks out among the rest? To one ordinary boy, he dreams of it everyday.

Our story begins with the young kid sleeping sideways in his bedroom. His room consists of drawings on his walls, a pile of dirty laundry in one corner next to his closet, and a personal computer next to his bed.

His name is Darrel Loyalität, a thirteen year old Caucasian male with brown messy hair. He is the only son in his family and a loving brother to two sisters. His father is a pilot, and his mother is a nurse. He goes to Saint James Middle School, a private school not far from his home.

As a teenager, he thought life would be fantastic. He could go anywhere, make great friends, find a girl, and maybe get a job. But, living life socially with others that aren't family members isn't all that's cracked up to be. He is kind, caring, but he's also shy and nervous around others.

His biggest passion is in music and video editing. He publishes his work, under an internet name 'Astrophel', and gets positive feedback. Despite kids talking about how great his videos are, he keeps his identity to himself.

But before he got into publishing videos, he had found a girlfriend. Her name is Sasha Waybright. Darrel met her in the first grade when someone was picking on him. They got along pretty well after she defended him. He thought she was cute, and he started being nice to her. As time went on, Sasha gained popularity, became head cheerleader in her first year at middle school, and got many people to adore her. However, when she gained popularity she barely had any recognition from Darrel. To keep from losing her, he did everything she asked him to do.

Eventually, aside from Sasha, he grew close with her two other friends, Marcy Wu and Anne Boonchuy. The four were inseparable, at first he thought it would be weird for a guy to be hanging with a bunch of girls. But, Sasha assured him that it'll keep him popular as long as she's popular. Darrel wasn't entirely sure about her statement, but he wanted to trust her. However, he had no idea how right he was, feeling unsure.

One day, the sun rose from the sky. Darrel's alarm went off and he got out of bed. He ate breakfast, got cleaned up, got dressed in his school uniform. He was so excited today, because Sasha's friend, Anne Boonchuy is turning thirteen today. He got his school bag, and packed his gift for Anne later in the day. "Hey Darrel, you ready for today?" his father asked. "I sure am," he replied. "Don't forget to bring your sisters to Anne's party after school," said his mother. "We'll be arriving shortly after work." Darrel nodded, "I promise, Mom." He gets on his red bike and kisses his mother goodbye. "See you later. I love you guys!" His parents wave goodbye as he makes his way to school.

He raced to school as fast as he could. He wanted to be the first to wish Anne a happy birthday. He parked his bike on the rack, locked the chain and waited in front of the school. While waiting for his friends to show up, he takes out his laptop and uploads his birthday video to Anne. "Cool! Astrophel uploaded another video!" Darrel started hearing his feedback. "It's Anne's birthday today? These effects are amazing."

After a few more minutes, Darrel packs up his laptop and sees Anne park her bike next to his. He races up to her with a smile on his face. "Anne!" Anne notices Darrel rushing to her. "Darrel!" Darrel hugs Anne out of joy. "Happy Birthday!" "Thanks, Darrel. I appreciate it."

As Darrel lets Anne go, she takes out a small packet of rice from her bag. "What kind of culinary treat do you have today?" Darrel asked. "It's a khao niew bing, a traditional Thai snack made up of rice and coconut milk. My mom made this for me," said Anne. "That's really sweet of her," said Darrel as he takes his backpack off his back and pats it, letting Anne know that he has her gift for her. "I have something special for you, after school."

As they exchanged a few laughs later on, Sasha walked up to them. "Hey guys!" "Hey Sasha," said Darrel and Anne. Sasha pats on Darrel's shoulder, making him lose a bit of his smile. "Happy Birthday Girl!" Sasha announced. The three danced in celebration, until the school bell interrupted them. "Buzzkill," said Sasha.

The three students were bored of going to school today. They really wanted to leave so we could celebrate Anne's birthday. As Darrel looks down, writing his notes, he remembers his family's advice. That if he puts his mind to whatever he wants to accomplish, he'll amount to anything. And right now, he wanted to get out of there and join Anne's birthday celebration with her family.

After going to the bathroom, he sees Anne and Sasha running through the halls. "Hey gals, what's up?" Darrel asked. "Let's get out of here Darrel," said Sasha. "We're going to celebrate Anne's birthday in style." Darrel felt a little edgy. "Skip school again? Don't you think we're cutting it close?"

Sasha shook her head. "Need I remind you we almost got in trouble on my thirteenth birthday?" Darrel asked. Sasha raised her hand, signaling Darrel to stop asking questions. "Sweetie, this is Anne's thirteenth birthday, she only gets one of those. So we're going to make it the best birthday in the history of birthdays."

Darrel was deeply concerned how far he's taking this. Not only for his sake, but for Anne's too. "Are you okay with this Anne?" "As long as I get home at six, my parents really want me to be there for my big birthday celebration," Anne replied. Darrel smiled, "Well guarantee it, Anne. Because I'll make sure you get there."

For the rest of the day, the three friends did everything. They rode shopping carts across the park. They tagged walls on business owned properties, nearly getting caught by the cops. They even made high scores in the arcade. At one point Darrel felt alive. But on the other hand, he was feeling disgusted. He skipped middle school for a third time. Nearly got caught the second time, though the first time was lucky. Today was the third day, but it was only half over. Darrel wanted to make sure Anne gets home for her birthday, but Sasha had that look that said otherwise.

Later that day, Darrel's hunch on Sasha was right. The three were enjoying beverages until Anne gets a text from her mother saying it's almost six. Anne shot up out of her seat when he realized what time it was. "Oh shoot! It's almost six, I gotta go guys!" Darrel wanted to help her, considering how he felt responsible for leaving school early. "I know a few shortcuts on how to get to your place."

He grabbed his bag and was about to leave with Anne until, "Family party, right? Lame. Let me guess, a clown with balloon animals?" Darrel turned to hear Sasha sound like she wanted Anne and him not to show up. "It's more than that, Sasha. It's celebrating her special day with people who love her," he said. But Sasha was looking at her phone, making Darrel feel more upset.

"Oh, Marcy says she found the perfect gift for you downtown, Anne." She shows a photo of a strange box. The box is ornamented with gold lining, with a frog icon on the lid. Also on the lid are four gems consisting of blue, purple, green, and red colors. "A frog music box for the frog lover. I wonder if those gems are real." Sasha, wanting to have more fun, pushes Anne and Darrel out of the store. "Let's keep this party train rolling."

Not wanting to abandon her family, Anne decided to speak up. "Sorry, dude you don't understand. I really have to go." Sasha decided to change her tone, "Oh I understand, Anne. You're a good little girl who has to go home to her mommy and daddy. Come on, hang out with your friends that love you."

Darrel tried to back Anne up on this one, considering he knows how much family means. "Sasha, if she has to go then-" However, Sasha puts her finger on Darrel's mouth shushing him. "Darrel, this is between the two of us. Just stay out of this. It has nothing to do with you." Darrel felt defenseless hearing those words. But as much as he wanted to stay on Sasha's good side, he couldn't bear to watch what she's doing to Anne. So he turned around and kept his eyes closed.

Now it was Anne's turn to try to convince Sasha. "Sasha, as much as I want to-" But, Sasha wasn't having any of it. "Anne, this isn't cute anymore. We are meeting up with Marcy right now! End. Of. Discussion." Darrel looks back to Anne with sadness. Giving in to her temptation, Anne said, "I guess it's okay if I'm a little late."

Darrel couldn't believe what's happening. Sasha is peer pressuring Anne to make her late for her birthday celebration. Darrel felt guilty for the rest of the journey downtown.

The three friends group up with Marcy, and she points inside the thrift store where the music box is located. Sasha instructed Anne to take the music box without anyone seeing her. Darrel knew for a fact that he could have done something to stop this. But as Anne walked out with the box, he started to regret not standing up to his girlfriend.

The four of them went to the park to see the box close up. Darrel was fascinated by it's look, but he remembered what his aunt always said, "Don't judge a book by its cover." When Anne opened the box, he thought, 'My aunt couldn't be more right.' The four looked down to see glowing lights, but then the lights glow brighter until there is nothing but white.

Darrel always thought life as a teenager would be different. But what he didn't know was that his life was about to change.

A Salamanderous Situation

We come down to the beginning of Darrel's adventure in the world of Amphibia. But before we could, I would like to turn our attention to Darrel's amphibian surrogate family, the Salamanders. If Anne's got frogs, Sasha's got toads, and Marcy has the newts, then why can't there be salamanders in this story? Well here we go, enjoy the chapter and be prepared for what comes next.

Chapter 1: A 'Salamanderous' Situation

Somewhere outside a mysterious, but beautiful marshland, a strange creature woke up ready for a new day. Out of nowhere, small items began to float close to the creature while he waved his hands. This creature is shown to be a fire spotted salamander, wearing a red t-shirt with a purple scarf and black pants. His name is Tint Tormak, and he has the skills of a mage. Well a mage-in-training. He walks outside to see his mentor reading an ancient scroll.

His mentor is seen wearing a green robe with a light blue cap. He's an old Axolotl salamander with a scar coming from his left eye. His left pupil however glows, helping him see again. Tint's mentor is none other than his Great Uncle Cronaxx. "Good morning, Tint." Tint yawns, "Good morning, Uncle Cronaxx."

Cronaxx closes his scroll and walks up to Tint. "Are we closer to finding it yet?" Tint asked. "Indeed we are," replied Cronaxx. He rolls out the scroll in front of Tint. The scroll reveals a staff with a red gemstone, implanted in a few mushrooms. "The Eternal Staff, the staff of all the magical abilities, known to the greatest of all wizards. Only a pure heart can hear the staff's call, and pull it out of hibernation."

Tint stares down on the staff and says, "Remind me again, why are we trying to find this staff? You told me I have enough power as it is." "I did," replied Cronaxx. "We are searching for the staff for educational purposes. To learn of the staff's location, and the powers we can sense within it." Cronaxx could see that Tint was a little annoyed. Carrying the responsibility of magic powers can really take a toll on the young salamander.

Cronaxx decided to comfort his nephew, "I'm sorry you feel this way, but you know something? I remember a small little hatchling who always admired his Great Uncle's magic tricks. Then one day, he told him that when he grew up, he wanted to be just like him." Tint smiled because he remembered that he was the hatchling. "Can we take a break and get some lunch?" Cronaxx nodded, "Sure, nephew."

Meanwhile, somewhere in the wilderness of the marshlands, a mysterious figure overshadowed a moss covered tree. The creature licking on the moss, reveals to be Darrel. He uses a crafted spear to pick fruits off of trees. Darrel is shown to have his jeans ripped up as shorts, his school uniform is dirty from surviving for three days, and his hair caught two sticks making him look like a deer.

Darrel was scared and didn't know what to do. He was stuck in a strange new world and he got separated from Sasha, Anne and Marcy. He thought back to what his parents used to tell him. "If you ever get upset, the best thing to do is to walk it off." So to calm his nerves, Darrel walks out to an open field. He was fascinated to see glowing fireflies flying around him, and the moon shining bright red.

"Okay, I can't give up," he said. "Not right now. If I'm ever going to find out how to get home, I'm going to need to find help." He takes out two photos, one with him and his girlfriend Sasha, and another with Anne, Sasha, and Marcy in a group shot. "Hang in there girls. If you're out there somewhere, I'll find you. And when I do, we'll find a way to get back home." He stuffs his photos in his backpack and walks into the forest.

When the Salamanders left the nearby village, they looked more cautious than before. Cronaxx and Tint have been told by the villagers that a strange monster has been spotted in the wilderness. One of the villagers almost got a glance at the creature. He described it to be a deer with small antlers, but standing on its hind legs. Limbs the size of twigs but with strength of a herring. Tint and Cronaxx took the warning seriously and made their way to the edge of the forest.

Darrel takes the time to hunt for more food. As he travels through the forest, he finds a glowing fruit on top of a tree. Rather than starving for another day, or licking more moss, he proceeds to climb up and reach out for the fruit. As he grabs the fruit, he feels something very hot on his back. "Is it just me, or does something smell good?" Darrel turns to see fire close to his back. He lets go of the branch and falls out of the tree and into the mud face first.

He resurfaced to take a breath, only to see Tint in a fighting stance. "Stand down, Creature!" He begins to cast fireballs in his hands, surprising Darrel. "I don't mean anymore harm." Darrel gasped, "You can talk?! And you can make fire?!" Tint squints his eyes in intimidation. "Guess we're both full of surprises," he said.

Darrel got to his knees and tried to calm Tint down. "Woah woah woah. It's okay, I don't mean any harm. I'm just lost, and I need help." Tint opened up his eyes. Something in his mind told him he was telling the truth. "You promise?" Tint asked. "Of course, I promise," Darrel replied.

Tint unclenched his fists to make the flames disappear. "Well then, since you're not hurting anyone, you should know that you almost hurt yourself." He pointed to the fruit and said, "That fruit up there is highly poisonous. One bite from that thing could have paralyzed you for life." Darrel looked up in shock realizing he almost made a mistake. "Thank goodness," he said. Darrel's stomach growls loud enough for Tint to hear. "Okay, so you got anything else to eat? Aside from bugs?" Tint ran out to a clearing just as Darrel got up from the mud. "Sure do, follow me."

As much as Darrel was weirded out by a talking lizard, he needed all the help he could get. Along the way, Darrel and Tint found a lot of mushrooms, and Darrel scarfed them down like a wolf. Tint laughs at Darrel's hungry behavior. "What's so funny?" Darrel asked. "You have a funny way of being hungry." Tint replied. He mocks Darrel's hungry habits, which makes Darrel laugh too.

"You may be a strange creature, but you're alright," said Darrel. "You're a strange fellow to me too," said Tint. "But like I said, we're both full of surprises. So, what's your name?" Seeing that he can get along with a strange creature as well, Darrel decided to be honest and trust him by answering his question.

Darrel smiled and said, "My name is Darrel. Darrel Loyalität." Tint points to himself and says, "I'm Tint Tormak, I'm a fire salamander." "Guess that explains the fire from your hands," said Darrel. "But, where I'm from, fire salamanders don't spew actual fire." "That's because other fire salamanders can't unless they are wizards in training."

Hearing Tint say that he is practicing actual magic made Darrel jump up with excitement. "You're a wizard?! Are you on a dangerous mystical quest right now?" Tint gave off a maybe kind of look. "Not exactly. My great uncle and I are just looking for an artifact. So it's more like a treasure hunt instead of a quest."

Darrel shrugged his shoulders, "Eh, amazing either way." The two walk back into the forest, wanting to know more about themselves. "So what are you, and where did you come from?" Tint asked. "I'm a human being," replied Darrel. He reaches out his hand and says, "And I come from another world!" His statement echoes into the trees.

"Do you have any idea how you got here?" Tint asked. "I do, but it's a long story," replied Darrel. "I would like to explain this to your uncle too. I'll tell you what, I'll help you find what you're looking for. And if you and your uncle let me stay, I'll gladly help you out, so long as you help me get back home."

Seeing that Darrel is begging for help made Tint somewhat responsible since he found him alone. Darrel reaches his hand out and asks him, "Do we have a deal?" Tint shakes his hand and replies, "Deal." The two continue to walk through the forest, in an effort to locate the staff. "You know what, Tint? I think this could be the beginning of a wonderful friendship. If you want it too, of course." Tint nodded, "Yeah, I think starting to be friends with you would be a great chapter of this story."

And with that, Darrel's loneliness comes to an end. He has met Tint the Salamander, and the two prepare themselves for what's coming next.

New World, New Life

Chapter 2: New world, New life

Somewhere nearby where Tint and Darrel were walking, Cronaxx grew worried for Tint. The farther he strayed from his nephew, the more anxious he became. "He should never feel left out just because he has magical powers," he said to himself. "Especially with what happened to him and his parents. I wanted to believe that what happened to them was only a bad dream. But it wasn't. And I hope he can understand soon."

As Cronaxx walked by a field of tall grass, he saw Tint's head pop out. Cronaxx rushed out of the grass as fast as he could to see what was going on. When he saw him on top of Darrel's shoulders, he thought he was in trouble. He casts a levitation spell to pick Tint up from Darrel's shoulders, then uses the element of the wind to blow Darrel away.

Tint was caught by surprise, "Darrel!" Cronaxx ran up to Tint, "Tint! Are you okay?" Tint nodded, "Yeah I'm okay." "What was that creature?" Cronaxx asked. "That was Darrel, he is a human who is lost and needs help. He said he came from another world, and he's trying to find a way to get back." Cronaxx looked to where he blew him away. "Oh dear, I hope he's okay," he said. "Can we help him?" Tint asked. "Of course we can, Tint. As long as he helps us with our journey," replied Cronaxx.

Cronaxx was happy to know that his great nephew befriended a creature so strange to the amphibians. But he did feel guilty straying him off the pathway, so he and Tint rushed off as fast as they could to find Darrel.

Darrel was blown far from where he last saw Tint. As the strong winds slowly died down, he started rolling down a steep hill. Darrel couldn't stop spinning as he tumbled down the hill, and started

feeling dizzy. As he rolled down, he grabbed a large leaf covered with silk spiderwebs. It stopped him from rolling, but the leaf ripped off the tree. Darrel slid the rest of the way down, until he reached the bottom.

Darrel felt really dizzy at the bottom of the hill. "Ugh, I really hate the spinning." He looks at the leaf and comes up with an idea, "Hmm, with the silk spider web, this leaf almost looks like a cloak." Darrel wraps it around his neck, giving him enough cloak to give him a built in hood. "A perfect fit, and my favorite color too."

Before anything else could happen, Darrel started hearing whispers in front of him. "Tint, is that you?" As much as I wanted to return to Tint and Cronaxx, my curiosity got the better of me and I approached the whispers.

Tint and Cronaxx traveled down the hill to where Darrel was blown away. "Darrel!" Tint called out. He looks down the hill to see drag marks on the grass. "He couldn't have gotten far, Tint. We'll find him," said Cronaxx. They carefully slid down the hill, avoiding rocks and trees.

When they got to the bottom of the hill, they found footprints leading into the forest. "Where did he go?" Tint asked. "Let's find out," replied Cronaxx. The two walk deeper into the forest to find Darrel.

Darrel followed the whispers until he came across a red jewel on a stick, poking out of mushrooms. He was entranced by its beauty. But remembered that his parents warned him not to touch anything weird. But the gemstone glowed and the whispers rang clear as a bell. 'Take the staff,' they said. Lost in the whispers, Darrel walked up and grabbed the staff. He pulled it out of the mushrooms, then started feeling an aura of strange energy flowing through his hands and into his heart. His eyes flashed red for a brief second.

The salamanders followed the tracks until they saw a faint glowing red. 'Could it be the Eternal Staff? And has Darrel found it?' Cronaxx

thought. When they get closer, they find Darrel pulling the Staff out with ease.

Cronaxx and Tint were shocked, for no creature in Amphibia could ever pull out that staff, unless they have pure of heart. Maybe Darrel has pure of heart after all, but what drives him to be pure?

Tint walks up to Darrel and says, "Darrel? Are you okay?" Waking up from his trance, Darrel places his head on his hand. "Yeah, I think so," he replied. "What just happened?" "The Eternal Staff has chosen you," said Cronaxx as he walks up.

"Darrel, this is my great uncle Cronaxx," said Tint pointing at his uncle. "Uncle Cronaxx, this is Darrel, he's a human." The two shake hands, smiling at each other. "You are quite a fascinating creature, Darrel. Sorry I pushed you away from my nephew." Darrel smiled, "It's okay Cronaxx, you were just protecting Tint."

He looked to the staff and said, "Any idea what this is?" "That is the Eternal Staff," replied Cronaxx. "And it has chosen you." Darrel turned his attention to Cronaxx. "Chosen me? For what?" "That's what we'll find out in due time. Come on Darrel, Let's get you some rest back at our hut."

Darrel smiled and said, "Okay. At least I can finally relax without fearing for my life in the wilderness." The three travel to the Salamanders' hut.

Along the way, Darrel decided to break the silence. "So guys. What is this world?" "This world we live in is called Amphibia," replied Cronaxx. "This world is inhabited by every species of amphibian - salamanders, frogs, toads, and newts. But there are also dangerous monsters that lurk in the wilds such as giant insects." Darrel was shocked, but then was fascinated with the fact that unordinary creatures exist in this world. Tint was happy to see that Darrel was enjoying hearing the lecture of Amphibia.

After a few more miles, Darrel decided to sing a song to raise the spirits.

(Song of the Lonely Mountain by Neil Finn)

Darrel:

Far over the Misty Mountains rise/

Leave me standing upon the height

What was before I see once more/

Is this kingdom a distant light?

(The salamanders were amazed with his voice they didn't pay attention to the staff that started glowing blue)

Mossy mountains beneath a moon/

The words unspoken, I'll be there soon

For home a song that echoes on/

And all who find me will know the tune

Some folk I'll never forget/

Some kind I'll never forgive

Haven't seen the back of me yet/

I'll fight as long as I live

All eyes on the hidden door/

To the Unknown Mountain borne

I'll ride in the gathering storm/

Until I get back long forgotten home

(As Darrel finished singing, the staff loses its blue glow)

The three arrive at the salamanders hut. "It's okay, Darrel. We wizards don't stay in one spot during magic training," said Tint. Darrel opens a trap door leading to the basement and puts down his school bag.

He takes out the two photos from his pocket to see Sasha, Anne, and Marcy smiling as best buds. He switched photos to see himself and Sasha, who gave him a kissy face while he was blushing. Remembering back when Sasha peer pressured Anne in taking the box, Darrel looked at that photo with guilt, and then switched back to the first photo.

As Darrel settled in the basement for the night, Tint came down and asked, "You settled in okay?" Darrel nodded, "Yeah, I'm good Tint. Thanks for taking me in." Cronaxx walked in after Tint, "It's the least we could do, Darrel. Kitchen's to your left, breakfast is at sunrise, and if you need anything else, just ask."

Darrel smiled, "Goodnight guys. We'll have much more to discuss about how I got here, and how I'm gonna get back home." "Indeed we will," said Cronaxx. "Goodnight Darrel," said Tint. The two climb out of the basement and the three prepare to sleep for the night. Darrel looked at the photo of his friends again and said, "Girls, I hope you are okay. Because I am."

After days of wandering in the wilderness, Darrel has found proper shelter with the Salamandrian Wizards. Not only that, Darrel has found the Staff of Climax for the salamanders, apparently choosing him to wield it's powers. With one adventure over, another begins for tomorrow. Darrel has no idea how much his life has changed. But he's preparing to find out.

Eagerness to Destiny

Chapter 3 - Eagerness to Destiny

Darrel woke up the very next morning to the sun shining on his face. He stretched his arms and legs, getting ready for a new day. For a while, he thought he was still out in the marshlands fending for himself. But after carefully looking around, he was grateful he was given shelter by the salamanders.

Darrel walks into the kitchen to see Cronaxx preparing breakfast. Tint was setting the table, very eager to eat what his uncle was cooking. "Good morning, guys," said Darrel. Tint waved, "Good morning Darrel!"

"How did you sleep, fine fellow?" Cronaxx asked. "I slept well, much better than the last few days since I arrived here." Darrel replied. Just then, his stomach growled. "So, what's for breakfast?" "It's my favorite, Springtail omelette," said Tint.

Cronaxx cooks up the omelettes after Tint prepares the table. As Cronaxx poured the mix Darrel got a glimpse of what the Springtails were. At first Darrel was disgusted by the texture, but his stomach told him he had to eat something.

Tint looked at Darrel with concern, "Are you okay, Darrel?" Darrel nodded, "I'm fine Tint, it's just that bugs are not usually what humans eat. But, I'll have to eat something if I'm ever going to get back home." "How did you survive out there, anyway?" Tint asked. "I survived only with fresh water and what snacks I packed in my bag. But, I couldn't bear to eat the insects."

Cronaxx nods, "One cannot think well, love well, and sleep well, if one has not dined well." Darrel smiled at his words of wisdom and Cronaxx gives him his portion of omelette. Darrel takes a piece of omelette and takes a deep breath. "As I always say when I eat

vegetables, 'Hakuna Matata.'" Darrel takes a bite and finds the omelette satisfyingly delicious. "Crunchy, yet satisfying."

As the three finish up breakfast Cronaxx and Tint prepare to hear Darrel's story. "Why don't you tell us how you got here," said Cronaxx. "Start from the beginning." Tint said. Darrel smiled with a satisfied stomach, and cleared his throat. "It all started a few days ago. I was hanging out with my friends, and my girlfriend, at the time." He takes out the two photos and shows them to the salamanders.

"These are my three friends from school." He points them from left to right. "This is Anne, Sasha, and Marcy." Then, he shows them the second photo. "Sasha is my girlfriend. I fell in love with her back in elementary school. But as time went on, she started to act more influential to others. In a negative way."

Tint could see the hurt in his eyes. "But, you still love her?" Darrel looked at the photo with gloom. "Yeah, I suppose so. Anyway, it was Anne's birthday. And Marcy found a strange music box at a thrift store. Sasha suggested that would be her perfect gift. So perfect, that she convinced her to steal it from the shop."

Cronaxx glared hearing that part of the story. "Now that was terrible."

"It gets worse," said Darrel. "Because I didn't stop her, and I paid the price: by ending up here. She opened the box and there was a bright light in our eyes. I blacked out, and when I woke up, I was lost in these marsh lands. I survived by drinking what little water and food I had packed in my bag, until I ran out. So I had to find a fresh spring until Tint found me."

Tint nodded at Cronaxx, then Cronaxx turned to Darrel. "So you got here by a strange music box? What did it look like?" Darrel finds a piece of parchment and a quill pen and tries to draw a picture of the box. "I haven't used a quill pen, but I'll try." He started drawing to the best of his ability with the tools that were given to him.

Darrel finished drawing the box. It looked edgy from using a quill pen for the first time. But it almost looked exactly like the box Anne had. "The box looks like this," said Darrel. "It looks a little edgy, but that box looks oddly familiar somehow," said Cronaxx. "Do you know what it is, Cronaxx?" Darrel asked. "Maybe, if I saw the real thing I could probably recognize it."

Darrel sighed, "Well, I don't have it with me. The last person who had it was Anne. And I don't know if she's out there or somewhere else." Darrel looks down to his empty plate. Tint grabbed his shoulder and said, "Darrel, I promise we'll do everything we can to try and help you get back home."

Darrel smiled, "You really mean it?" "That's what friends do," replied Tint.

Darrel smiled and hugged his new Salamandrian friend. Cronaxx patted his shoulder soon after. After they cleaned up their plates, Darrel decided to help the salamanders by cleaning up around the hut. Cronaxx was most pleased with his work.

"I must say, Darrel, you do such a marvelous work cleaning up," said Cronaxx. "Thanks Cronaxx," said Darrel. "My mom gave me daily chores around the house. She always tells me and my sisters that we all have an important part to play in our family."

When Darrel got to the kitchen, Tint saw him spruce the place up like it was a permanent home. "Wow, Darrel. The kitchen looks amazing!" Darrel smiled, "This wasn't the first time I cleaned in a kitchen." "When was your first time?" Tint asked.

"About two months ago," replied Darrel. "Sash and I decided to eat at Anne's family restaurant..."

(Flashback)

Sasha took Darrel to Anne's family restaurant. She wanted to treat him to dinner, and a surprise. So Darrel, after paying for dinner for

her many times, was under the impression that she wanted to pay for dinner this time. They took their seats and they talked until their food arrived. "Gotta say, Anne, this food is devine!" said Sasha. "Yeah Anne, there's nothing my mother wouldn't kill for exquisite taste like this," said Darrel. "Thanks guys, that means a lot," said Anne.

It wasn't until they got the check that Sasha announced my surprise. It was supposed to be Darrel's first dine and dash. Sasha bolted, leaving Darrel behind. He hesitated to follow her because the Boonchuys worked so hard to make them the food. He never felt so betrayed before.

Not wanting anymore trouble, he stayed in his seat and told Mrs. Boonchuy what happened. She was really angry with him, and punished him for not paying. He was forced to work for the Boonchuys until the debt was settled.

However, it wasn't all bad. Anne stood by his side and showed him what he's supposed to do. Sweep the floors, wash dishes and pans, even scrub the bathrooms. At first it was back breaking work, but he eventually got used to it. Anne helped keep his chin up all the way. Darrel felt grateful that she had his back.

One day, as things got slow in the restaurant, Darrel and Anne decided to talk while washing dishes. "You know something Anne? Your mom is tough..." "I know, I am sorry, Darrel," said Anne. But Darrel smiled, "For what? Doing a great job? I don't blame her for being upset. She works hard trying to provide you, and I took advantage of her. I already apologized, and I'm going to work hard to earn her trust."

While not looking, Darrel accidentally dropped a chef knife in the sink. And as an idiot, he grabbed the blade and it slit in between the fingers in his left hand. "OW!"

"What happened?" Anne asked. "I dropped a chef knife in the sink and tried to grab it." "Hold on, I'll get the first aid kit. Just keep it

under running water."

While Anne got the first aid kit Darrel feels the stinging in the running water. She came back, and helped Darrel by cleaning his cut and patching it up. She took his hand and kept a cloth on his cut.

Darrel looked into her eyes, and genuinely smiled at her. What Darrel didn't know was that he had a tint blush on his face. Sasha never did anything like this to him before. "Thank you, Anne. You're a great friend," said Darrel. "You're welcome Darrel. I was happy to help," replied Anne.

The two hear footsteps approaching, and Anne was about to let go of his hand. But Darrel wanted her to hold on just a little more. Mrs Boonchuy walked in and Anne explained what happened. She was grateful that Darrel wasn't more badly hurt.

(Flashback Ends)

Tint and Darrel continue cleaning by dusting the bookshelves from top to bottom. "Wow, that was really nice of Anne to help you out," said Tint. Darrel looks to his left hand revealing a small scar in between his fingers. "I don't think Sasha would've done that for me."

Tint climbs up on one of the bookshelves to reach the far back of the top shelf. But, he suddenly loses his grip and slips. "Darrel!" Tint cried. Darrel turned in surprise and shock. "TINT!"

Just as Darrel reaches for Tint, Tint suddenly stops falling. Darrel and Tint stare with their jaws dropped. Darrel's hands were glowing a bright red and Tint was floating under a bright red cloud. "Tint, what's happening to me?" Darrel asked. "You're performing magic, Darrel!" Tint replied.

Darrel was scared and confused, "What do I do? How do I get you down?" Tint kept his eyes on Darrel trying to give him assurance on what to do next. "Darrel, look at me. Just lower your hands slowly, it'll get me down."

Darrel took a deep breath and listened to Tint's advice. He lowered his hands slowly, not wanting to hurt his new friend. The red cloud disappeared as Darrel brought his hands down.

Darrel stood with amazement. "How did I do that? Humans can't perform magic like that." Remembering something he read in a scroll, Tint came up with an idea. "Raise your hand as if you're calling someone." Darrel did exactly that, and the Eternal Staff flew into his hand.

Tint smiled in amazement, "It's the Eternal Staff, it has given you magical abilities." "You mean, I can do magic?" Darrel asked. Just then, Cronaxx walked in. "Exactly, Darrel. I think I know another spell you should try to perform. Reach out your hand, pretend you're holding a ball and close your eyes."

Darrel closes his eyes and reaches his hand out. The staff glows bright white and forms an orb of light surrounding his hand. Tint watches in amazement that an extraordinary creature, such as a human, can also perform magic.

Darrel opened his eyes and said, "This is so awesome! I wish my friends could see this." Cronaxx keeps looking at the orb and smiled, "Congratulations Darrel, you have mastered the basic vision spell."

Darrel looks at the orb and begins to see two blurry figures, one small and one large. He looks in shock. "Wait, is that...?" The orb diminishes its light to reveal Anne and a frog running through a forest. "Anne! She's alive!"

"And she's here," said Cronaxx. Tint and Darrel looked to him with shock. "WHAT?!" they cried. "I've traveled across Amphibia for a very long time. And this part of the world is located near the city of Wartwood," said Cronaxx.

Darrel smiled in excitement. "If Anne is there, then that means Sasha and Marcy are in Amphibia too!" "We can find them in no

time!" Tint cheered. Cronaxx calmed them down, "Well now, hold on, we'll need to decide who to find first."

Darrel had to make a choice at that moment. He didn't hesitate when he decided, "We find Anne first. She was the last one with the music box, so maybe she still has it on her."

Cronaxx then shows the map of Amphibia, "Then that'll be a problem, because the valley is surrounded by mountains that are impenetrable this time of year. It'll clear up in a couple months, but I assume you want to get to her now."

Darrel nodded, "More than anything." "It'll take some time to get prepared. Can you wait for a couple more days?" Tint asked. Darrel nodded, "I assume I'll need to learn more on how to control my magic abilities?" "Exactly." Cronaxx replied. "But don't worry, the staff will help you as long as you're willing to listen. Are you ready, human?"

Darrel smiles with pride, "Yes I am. I'll do anything to find my friends, and get back home." Tint offers his hand to Darrel, "Then let's get started."

Darrel got really excited. He's not the only human in Amphibia. If he can regroup with Anne, he and his salamander pals can get more information about the music box. And who better to learn about this artifact than from a wizard himself.

Wartwood or Bust

Chapter 4 - Wartwood or Bust

After a few days staying with the salamanders, Darrel immediately woke up. Today is the day the trio make their way to Wartwood. Having discovered he gained magical abilities, thanks to the Eternal Staff, Darrel never felt more excited in his life. Thanks to his new magical abilities, he has also discovered that Anne is in Amphibia too. And if he's not mistaken, so are Sasha and Marcy.

But, Darrel had to stick with the original plan: To find Anne and the music box first, then find everyone else. Thanks to the Salamanders, he'll have no problem. He was very grateful with Tint and Cronaxx teaching him how to control his newfound powers the last few days.

Darrel listened very carefully, and mesmerized all their moves and tricks. Now all that's left is to read spell books to learn more spells. And thanks to the staff, Darrel was able to translate the ancient Salamandrian tongue.

As much as he wanted to learn more spells, today was the day the trio traveled to Wartwood. But, the only way to do that was to teleport there, magically. Cronaxx and Tint prepare a ritual circle, one that is meant for transporting from one place to another.

"Is everything all set?" Cronaxx asked. "Yep, I packed everything we needed," replied Tint. Darrel packed his stuff together. "So, we're about ready to leave?" Cronaxx nodded, "Indeed we are. Stand in the center and call the staff for extra power. We're going to need all the magic we can muster."

Darrel calls to the Eternal Staff, closes his eyes, as Cronaxx begins to speak in ancient Salamandrian tongue. Darrel and the Salamanders felt the magic getting strong, so they kept a firm stance on the circle. Bright lights filled the room and in their closed eyelids.

They could feel the winds blowing on their skins. Darrel had a great feeling that the spell was working.

As the winds and lights died down, Darrel opened his eyes to see that they're not in the Salamander's hut anymore. They have transported to a much more green, swampy environment.

"Did it work? Are we in Wartwood?" Darrel asked. Tint nodded, "Yes Darrel, we made it. Welcome to Wartwood." Darrel smiled with glee knowing that he's close to finding his friend.

Just then, Cronaxx falls to his knees. Darrel rushes to his side. "Cronaxx, are you okay?" Cronaxx nods as he yawns. "I'll be fine, Darrel. I'm just getting too old for teleportation. I'll need rest."

Tint points out to a clearing. "Wartwood is just beyond this forest." Not wanting to waste another second standing around, Darrel decided to carry Cronaxx until he had the strength to walk again. They traveled through the forest until sundown then suddenly, Darrel started thinking about his friends.

He takes out his two photos and looks at them with determination, "Don't worry girls, I'm coming." But as he stared down at the photos, his mind switched between Anne and Sasha. The Staff not only gave him magical abilities, but also gave him a sense of realization.

He looks to Sasha only to see that she stayed popular, while he stayed quiet. As he looks to Anne, she reminds him that she was there for him at times when he looks to Sasha for help. Darrel then realized something, he got to a point where he thought, 'Does Sasha still love me? Or has the attention got the better of her.'

As the night grew darker, and the mushrooms glow from the roots of the trees, Darrel decided to let off some emotional steam. While thinking about Anne, he reflects on all the good times they had together. Some of these feelings may feel confusing, but whatever it was, Darrel felt like he had to get it out of the open.

So while the three adventurers stopped at a tree, Darrel took out his pocket knife and carved something on the root. "What are you doing, Darrel?" Tint asked. "Illustrating different feelings, Tint," replied Darrel. Tint watches him carve initials D+A inside a heart.

Tint was confused, "Does the A stand for Anne? I thought Sasha was your girlfriend." Darrel nodded, "Yes. I don't know if it's just a fling, or an eye opener. I just want to know if I'm doing the right thing."

Cronaxx spoke up, "Wisdom knows that relationships can change over time, courage knows when it's time to change the relationship." Darrel didn't know what to say after that, only to smile and to finish his carving.

Later on, as the night grew darker, the three arrived outside the Gates of Wartwood. They entered, surprisingly without drawing a lot of attention. Tint's stomach started to growl, and luckily Darrel pointed at a place called Stumpy's Diner.

They entered the diner, with only a few patrons hanging out. A big frog with a chef hat came and gave them slop. Judging by his peg leg and his missing arms, Darrel assumed that he was the owner, Stumpy. "Enjoy, or don't, doesn't matter to me," he said in a monotone.

Tint showed a frown, "Poor guy, it's like he and this place lost its passion."

"Well we can't magically give it back to him," said Cronaxx. "There are things that people have to find within themselves."

That's when Darrel came up with an idea, "You know, whenever my friends or my family feel a bit down. I always cheer them up with singing and dancing. My strongest passion is music after all." Cronaxx smiled, "Is that so? Tint here is an expert with the flute."

Tint smiles, and takes out his flute as Darrel's staff starts glowing blue.

Darrel takes his mug and says, "Everyone! A toast, to the world of Amphibia."

As the frog patrons look with curiosity or fear, the staff begins to glow brighter with music notes as Tint plays the first note.

(Original Song: Toast to 15 years World of Warcraft)

Darrel:

We met many days ago, upon a muddy road/

You a humble mage, and me I'm just a rogue/

I was the weakest of the weak, the lowest of the low/

But when we journey together, this legend will grow/

(Darrel takes the staff in his hands and stomps it in rhythm. In doing so, the frogs do as well.)

We'll journey our way from Blackrock Spire to Moulton Core/

Take 40 hours in Ragnaros and only now want more/

My days of being weak are firmly in the past/

And now my shield is stronger, my bonds are built to last!//

(The frogs smile and bounce to his beat. This gets the attention of another frog who takes out his accordion and dances with Darrel and Tint. Darrel's hands produce light in many colors, like the ones in a dance club. He smiles and continues his jamboree.)

So whether you are a salamander or if you are a frog,/

It's time to toast to Amphibia, so everyone raise your mug! /

No enemy can defeat us, there's no battle we can't win. /

When we crunch the numbers, stand together and... /

(That's when Stumpy came in from the kitchen, he watched in the dining room and climbed on his barstand.)

Stumpy: STUMPY! STAGE DIVE!

Stumpy performs a stage dive and Darrel catches him with his levitation spell. The frogs in Stumpy's enjoyed the performance, and it caught the attention of other frogs outside. Soon all of Stumpy's was packed, even the Mayor of Wartwood was entertained. Then, four more enter Stumpy's, feeling quite fascinated.

Voice 1: Wow! Look at all the pretty lights.

Voice 2: Stay close kids, (looks to see Tint.) Ah, a salamander mage.

Voice 3: It looks like he's not alone. (The third voice looks to see a figure in a blue cloak, but couldn't see who it was.)

Darrel:

I have a little news for you, it's something of a treat. /

Are you ready to travel Amphibia on your own two feet? /

We're going down to places where anything can hurt ya! /

So Polish your shield, sharpen your axe, we're going back to Vanilla!

The performance was a success. All the citizens of Wartwood came together, either they really liked their performance, or they were entranced by their magical abilities. Either way, the three had to wrap it up before they could cause any more rukkus across the valley.

"Alright, simmer down. Simmer down, now. As much as the people of Wartwood liked your performance, I would advise you keep this to a minimum. People are about ready to sleep around here," said the Mayor.

Cronaxx nodded in agreement and said, "I promise you, Mr. Mayor, it won't happen again. I'll keep a close watch on these two youngsters." "Yeah, this is a one time thing. We'll be on our way now," said Darrel. "I gotta say, Cronaxx, That was nothing compared to the videos I've created before. Those were real life special effects."

Then, a voice was heard, "Darrel?" Darrel recognized the voice and was shocked that he dropped his staff. He turns around to see Anne Boonchuy, right in front of him. He removed his hood to get a better look.

The two friends were shocked. "Anne?" Anne was filled with relief and excitement, "DARREL!" Darrel was cheerful, he found his friend. "ANNE!" Anne suddenly lunged at Darrel and almost fell to the ground. Luckily, his footing was in the right place and caught himself as they swung around.

"Oh My Gosh! I can't believe it! You're here too?!" Anne wasted no time talking with him. "I wasn't sure. I woke up, I was all alone, and- Are Sasha and Marcy with you? Where have you been?" Before Darrel could even have a chance to talk, Anne hugs him. "I missed you so much!"

Darrel returned her hug and said, "I missed you too, Anne! You have no idea what's happened to me the past few days!" He looks to Tint smiling. "Oh Anne, there's someone I like you to meet. These two are Salamander wizards. They found me out in the wilderness when I was lost."

He turned to the Salamanders and said, "Tint, Cronaxx, this is one of the friends I was telling you about: Anne Boonchuy." Tint walks up to her, "Hi Anne, My name's Tint Tormak." "And I am Cronaxx, at your

service." Cronaxx takes a bow and Anne bows as well. "Nice to meet you. Darrel, Salamanders, meet the Plantars. Here's Hop-pop, Polly, and Sprig."

Darrel and the salamanders wave hello to the frogs, "Hello there." "Sup?" "Hey there, I'm Anne's best friend too." Darrel takes a knee and offers Sprig a handshake. "Well any friend of Anne, is a friend of mine. Put 'er there, pal." Sprig shakes Darrel's hand, as Cronaxx takes a big yawn. "It's getting late, we should get some rest."

That's when Anne decided, "You guys can come with us to the Plantar's farm." Hop-pop was a little worried, "Woah, hold on Anne. We're a farm, not a bed and breakfast. We may not have any more room for these three."

Sprig came up with an idea, "What about Bessie's Stable? There's plenty of room there." Darrel shrugged, "I'll take anything that's a roof over my head."

"If you let us stay, we'll gladly help around the farm. You don't even need to pay us," said Cronaxx. "All we ask for is shelter. Deal?"

Hop-pop was reluctant at that point, but he eventually shook his hand. "Okay, but you're responsible for your human." Darrel gave Hop-pop some reassurance. "I can handle myself Hop pop, you won't ever have to worry about me."

The seven arrived at the Plantar's farm and Darrel and the Salamanders settled in Bessie's barn. Inside the barn showed a sleeping large snail, they set up their sleeping equipment near the haystacks. Once they unpacked their stuff, Darrel walked outside to see the Plantar Farm. The crops looked fresh and the view of the land was breathtaking.

Suddenly, Darrel hears a knock on one of the windows leading to the basement. "Anne?" Anne opens up the window, "Darrel, come on in."

Darrel crawls in through the window and sits down on a crate. Darrel smiled, "I can't believe I found you, Anne. I knew you would be here."

Anne smiled, but was confused, "How could you know?" At that moment, Darrel knew it was time to show Anne his powers. He takes a glance at a barrel full of water and he performs hydrokinesis in front of her. She watched in shock and amazement.

"How else can a wizard know these things?" Darrel asked. "You can perform magic!" Anne exclaimed. "Indeed I can," said Darrel. "But I don't think I have the power to transport us back home. So far, our only option is that music box. Do you still have it?"

Anne pulls out the box, "I do, but it's not working. Think it's busted?" Darrel gets a good glance at the box. She opens it to reveal nothing happening, and the four gems lose their colors. Darrel was curious, "Strange, do the Plantars know about this?" Anne shook her head, "No, do the Salamanders?"

Darrel nodded, "Yes, I thought if I could show them the box, Cronaxx may have an idea what we're dealing with. But, if you want to wait until we can trust everyone, we'll keep it hidden until the time is right."

Anne smiled, "Thanks, Darrel." Darrel smiled back until Hop pop appeared, "C'mon kids, bedtime." Darrel nodded, "Okay, Hop pop. I'll see you in the morning Anne." Just as Darrel got up, Anne hugged Darrel in a firm grip. "I'm so glad you're here with me." Darrel returned her hug and said, "Me too. I'm so glad I found you first."

Darrel gets out of the basement and makes his way back to Bessie's Barn. He looks to the stars until he falls asleep, along with Tint and Cronaxx. 'I'm so happy we're together again. She has always been there for me,' he thought.

Domino Effect

Chapter 5 - Domino Effect

Over the next few days, Darrel and the Salamanders remained loyal to their word. While staying at the Plantar farm they helped out with harvesting the crops, cleaning up the house, and taking care of their slimy bunk mate, Bessie. Darrel didn't mind doing most of the work, because he's the kind of guy who knows that hard work eventually pays off.

Hop pop had never felt more pleased in his life. "I gotta say, Cronaxx. Your human companion is very helpful around here." Cronaxx smiled, "That's because he has good reason." The two elderly amphibians watch as Darrel finishes hoeing the fields. Around the same time, Anne brings out a sack of seeds and throws in a handful at a time. The two humans high five, as Sprig invites them out to play in the wilderness.

"You sure he's not using magic to plant the crops?" Hop pop asked. "Magic is not the solution to all our problems," replied Cronaxx. "Apparently, Darrel knows that," Hop pop said with a grin.

That's when they hear a loud bang in Bessie's stable. The two rush to find Tint covered in snail slime and Bessie coming out of her shell chirping. "Unfortunately, my nephew still has a lot to learn." Cronaxx gives Tint a washcloth to wash off the slime from his body.

Meanwhile out in the wilderness, Anne, Sprig, and Darrel, took their extra time to play baseball. Anne was up at bat, using the garden sickle Darrel used for the crops. "Hey Batta batta batta."

Darrel was behind her as the catcher, using only his bare hands. "Come on, boy oh boy oh boy. Right down the ol' alley. Put 'er over the ol' plate! Come on!"

Sprig prepares to throw a watermelon as their ball. He struggles at first, but musters all of his energy to throw it at them. The watermelon comes at them, and Anne takes a swing. She misses the watermelon, and it hits Darrel, knocking him down. At the same time, Anne loses her grip on the sickle and goes flying at Sprig.

"Sprig! Watch out!" Darrel grunted. Sprig ducks down only for the sickle to slice his hat in two. The sickle flies into the forest, until it hits a tree.

"Wanna go again?" Sprig asked. "Yeaaaaaaah!" Anne cheered. "Wait, you have hair?"

As the three enter the forest, Darrel looks to his hands. They are shown to be a little red from the watermelon that splattered on him. "Are you alright, Darrel?" Anne asked. Darrel nodded, "I'll be fine Anne. My hands may feel bruised, but I'm fine."

Anne smiled in relief, "Okay. Oh sorry about your hat Sprig." "It's okay," said Sprig.

The three venture deep in the forest until they find the sickle wedged in a tree. "There it is," said Anne. As she grabbed it, she heard what sounded like a meow. As the two boys arrived, she shushed them and said, "Do you hear something?"

The three listen again, and they hear another meow. "Is that a cat?" asked Darrel. "Sounds like it's in trouble," said Anne.

The three rush to find the source of the sound. The three gasp as they see three giant wasps trying to sting the creature stuck in the mud. "Oh my gosh!" Anne cried. "We have to save her." "Right behind ya," said Sprig.

Darrel takes out his staff, but shakes in fear. "I hate wasps," he whispered to himself. "Why do they have to be wasps?" As he trembled in fear, a purple aura began to glow from the staff. Then it starts shooting shadow beams rapidly.

The wasps dodged the beams at the same time Anne pulled the creature out of the mud. "Gotcha." Darrel regains control of the staff and cries, "Anne! Let's get out of here!" Anne escapes the wasps and Sprig hits them with stones.

"Take that buzz brains!" Sprig cried. "Go sting someone your own size." "Don't agitate them! You'll make them more angry!" shouted Darrel. "Let's go!" cried Anne as the two humans hid in the forest. "Sprig out! Peace!" Sprig jumps backwards into a bush and follows his friends.

Anne and Darrel return to the tree where the sickle remained. Darrel dropped his staff and fell on all fours, breathing at a fast pace. Anne turned her attention to him, "Darrel, are you okay?"

Darrel nodded, catching his breath. "Yeah, but just remind me that I hate wasps!" Anne grinned, "Still can't get over what happened back then?" Darrel shook his head, "I was young. And a few wasps were near my ear. Of course I'm not over it yet."

Anne smiled, "Hey, at least we saved this little fella." Darrel and Anne look at the creature, which turns out to be a caterpillar, then Anne gives off a high pitched shriek.

Sprig arrives immediately hearing Anne shriek. "What's wrong? Are you stung?" he takes the sickle and announces, "We'll have to amputate." Darrel stops Sprig before he could do anything else. "Calm down Sprig, we're not stung," said Darrel.

"He's right," said Anne. She takes out her phone. "This caterpillar looks exactly like my cat domino from back home." She shows a photo of her cat to Sprig and then shows the caterpillar with the same resemblance.

"Oh yeah," said Darrel. "I see the resemblance." Anne put her phone away and said, "I loved my cat more than anything in the world. She was irreplaceable, but now I found a replacement."

Then Anne announced, "Let's take her home with us." Sprig wasn't so sure about this. And neither was Darrel. "I don't know Anne," said Sprig. "that's a wild animal. I'm not sure bringing it home is a good idea."

Darrel nodded in agreement, "I have to agree with Sprig, Anne. And besides, caterpillars eventually change into butterflies. Who knows what he could turn into?"

Anne however shrugged it off. "That's ridiculous. My cat back home was a stray when I adopted her. Besides, I know how much you like Domino, Darrel. You used to play with Domino all the time when you and Sasha visited."

Darrel was shocked. He thought back to the times he and Sasha visited Anne's house to hangout. Most of the time, Sasha was talking with Anne. Darrel, being the kind of person who talks less, spent most of his time with Anne's cat Domino. He shows his videos to Domino, leaving her mesmerized. But when Anne saw him spending time with her cat, she smiled.

"You saw me playing with your cat?" Darrel asked. "Of course," replied Anne. "All it took was love, patience, and... love." "You said love twice," said Sprig. Anne brings the caterpillar up in Darrel's face, giving him her big puppy eyes. "Well I do love cats..." said Darrel.

Before he could do anything else, Anne hugged him. "Thank you thank you thank you." "But on two conditions: One, Sprig has to be on board with this. And two, we keep an eye on him at all times. I'm not sure what this caterpillar is going to look like in its final phase of metamorphosis."

Anne brings the caterpillar up to Sprigs face, and the caterpillar licks it. Immediately, Sprig said, "Sold."

"It's settled," said Anne. She takes the sickle from Sprig and announces, "I hereby dub thee, Domino 2." A ray of sunlight shines on the caterpillar as Anne knights her. "Come on girl, let's go home."

As the three prepare to leave, Domino 2 stands still. Then, falls to her side. "Uh, is it broken?" Sprig asked.

Then, Darrel got an idea. "Anne, can I see your backpack?" Anne nods, "Sure, why?" "I got an idea." As Darrel looks through her bag, he finds a toy mouse and rattles it in front of Domino 2. "If this worked on Domino 1, then maybe...."

Domino 2 was mesmerized by the toy, and surprisingly Sprig too. They slowly ventured their way back home. "I can't believe that worked," said Darrel. "That was clever thinking, Darrel," said Anne. "Thanks Anne, it takes a friend to know a friend's cat."

Back at the Plantar farm, Hop pop was chopping worm bits for lunch. Darrel walked into the kitchen, "Hey Hop pop." Hop pop turned to see him. "Oh hey Darrel, what do you want?"

Darrel could feel a strict sense in Hop pop's guts. So he said, "I just want to ask you something, if that's okay?" Hop pop nodded, "Okay, what is it?"

Darrel took a deep breath and asked, "Have you ever had a pet around the house before me and Anne arrived?"

Hop pop was surprised he asked that, "I hope you're not asking about getting a pet. Because the answer is no." Darrel shook his head no, "I'm not Hop Pop. It's just that my family had pets back home, and I was wondering if you knew how hard it was to take care of them."

Hop pop nodded, "Oh, I know just as well as the next amphibian. Every time we get a pet, Sprig and Polly swear they're going to take care of it. Like this one spider we had, Charlie Big-Bottom. I mean, sure they were there for all the cuddling and the snuggling. But, I end up doing all the hard work."

Hop pop chops more worm bits while he vents, "I swear to frog, whoever brings in another fuzzy critter in this house will be on dung

duty for a month."

Darrel nods in understanding, "Thanks for clearing that up Hop pop." Then, he walks out the front door, where Sprig, Anne, and Domino 2 are waiting.

"Okay, so it's clear that Hop pop doesn't want any more pets in this house," said Darrel. "Then, we're going to have to sneak him inside," said Anne. "I can't be any part of what happens next Anne," said Darrel. "If Hop pop catches Domino 2, it's dung duty for a month."

"Should we be concerned about this?" Sprig asks, showing Domino 2 munching on his leg. Darrel felt very concerned, but Anne. "That is called play biting. Isn't it cute?" Sprig was a tad worried when Domino 2 started licking his leg. "Yeah, kinda looks like she's tasting me."

"That's ridiculous," said Anne. "Trust me, I know cats." Darrel spoke up, "But that's not a cat, Anne. That's a caterpillar." "It's still the same thing," said Anne. "It's a completely different thing!" Darrel argued. "Just help me sneak her into the basement," said Anne.

Darrel groaned in defeat, "Ugh, fine. Sprig, I got Hop pop to talk about Charlie Big-Bottom. See if you can keep him occupied until we get this critter in the basement."

Sprig went into the house first and saw Hop pop still venting about his experience with their last pet. It looked like he wasn't going to look at the living room anytime soon, so Sprig signaled them to the basement door. But just as they were about to reach the door, Domino 2 sneezed. It startled them all, including Hop pop. As he turned around, Sprig got in his face and got him to look away from Anne and Darrel.

The two successfully sneak down with the caterpillar and sigh with relief. "Okay, that was way too close." Anne shrugged, "At least we got her inside." Darrel shrugged in annoyance, "Yeah, at least."

Darrel climbs out to join Tint and Cronaxx. "I'll catch you later Anne, I'll be in Bessie's stable if you need me." But before he could, Anne stopped him by saying, "Hey, thank you for helping me Darrel." Darrel turns around to see Anne smiling at him. Seeing her smile made him give in and smile back. "You're welcome Anne. That's what friends are for."

The next morning, in the stables, Darrel stretched as he prepared for a new day. "Good morning, Tint," said Darrel. Tint was hand standing as his way of preparing for the day. "Good morning Darrel. Today is going to be a great day."

"How so?" Darrel asked. "Because we're going to connect with nature, as part of your magic training," replied Cronaxx. Darrel smiled, "Okay."

So the Salamanders packed lightly and prepared to venture into the wilderness. They spot Hop pop harvesting in the fields. "We're going to be gone for the day Hop pop," said Cronaxx. "We'll be back by sundown." Hop pop nodded, "Okay, look after yourselves."

The trio venture into the forest and reach higher ground by climbing up trees. The three look over the horizon to see the same wasps that Darrel, Anne, and Sprig fought against. Darrel sat down looking a little agitated.

"What's wrong, Darrel?" Tint asked. "It's those wasps out there," Darrel said pointing in their direction. "I had a bad experience with wasps when I was 9 years old. I got curious what their nest looked like up close and a couple wasps got near my ear. I got scared and one of them stung my arm."

Cronaxx listened and smiled, "Do you know why those wasps did that?" Darrel looked confused, "Because they were mean?" Cronaxx shook his head, "It's because like you, they felt threatened. They defended their home, because like you they have family."

Darrel looks at the wasps with realization, he watches them working together as one cohesive unit. After pollinating giant flowers, harvesting nectar, they return to their nest providing the food they gathered to their newborn larvae. Darrel smiled at what they're doing.

"You're right, Cronaxx. I know that now." Tint smiled, "Magic exists in many forms that surround life itself. Magic is not a practice. It is a living, breathing web of energy that, with our permission, can encase our every action." Darrel looks to the wasps that stare at him from a distance. He nods at them and they fly into their nest.

Then, Tint spots another wasp carrying what looked like Domino 2. "Looks like that one's hungry," he said. "Looks like he did us a favor," said Cronaxx. "Why?" Darrel asked. "It's just a caterpillar." "That is a Coastal Killapillar," Tint explained. "They are dangerous amphibivores. Sure they look cute, but wait until they change into monsters."

That horrifying description put Darrel into a shock of realization. He, Anne, and Sprig, had basically put them all in danger. He jumped down the tree from branch to branch, and reached ground level.

"Darrel! What's wrong?!" Tint cried. "Anne and the Plantars are in trouble!" Darrel shouted as he raced back to the house. This concerned Tint and Cronaxx and they followed him soon after.

Back at the house, after a long day, Anne and Sprig were in the kitchen eating pounds of food. Hop pop spotted them and said, "Woah there, hungry much?" Sprig and Anne turned around with food in their mouths. "We've been running around all day. We're starving," said Sprig.

This got Hop pop curious, "Running around? Doing what?" The two looked at each other, and quietly said, "Oh nothing." "I mean who's to say really?"

Just then, the door swung open and Darrel rushed to find the three in the kitchen. "Anne! Sprig! Hop pop!" The sudden burst got their full attention. "Darrel, what's going on?" asked Hop pop. Darrel looked at Anne and Sprig, knowing they were going to get into trouble.

Darrel said, "Hop pop, we're in danger. We've gotta get out of here now!" That's when they hear a sudden bang from the basement. "What was that?" Hop pop asked. "I really hate to think what's down there," said Darrel.

Hop pop opens the door to the basement filled with cobwebs and scratch marks. The four gasp at the site of an open web covered chrysalis on Anne's bed. "Oh no," said Darrel. "We're too late." Anne turned in fear, "You don't think..?" She turns her attention and shouts, "Domino 2, where are you? Baby Precious!"

"Wait. Baby Precious?" Hop pop then realized something. "That's a pet name, for a pet!" He turns his attention to Sprig, "You sneak a pet in here?"

Sprig was in a tight spot, but Darrel cut the tension. "It's worse than a pet Hop pop. We snuck in a predator." Hop pop was surprised, "YOU WHAT?!" "Wait, a predator?" asked Sprig.

Darrel nodded, "Yes, a Coastal Killapillar. They are more dangerous when they change into their mature states." Anne didn't want to believe him, "Really? How bad can they be?"

Hop pop squinted his eyes and said, "Very bad, Anne." Then the four hear something crawling on the ceiling. They stayed in a group until Darrel felt something breathing down the back of his head. He turns to see the killapillar swoop down and reveal its butterfly stage.

The creature screeches with its claw-like legs, it's dominant red eyes, and flaps with its powerful wings. Anne suddenly realizes, "Domino 2? Is that you?"

Hop pop quickly shushed Anne, "These monsters respond to sound. Let's back away slowly and quietly." The four do just that, in hopes to trap Domino 2 in the basement.

However, all that changed when, "HEY FAMILY! What's Happening In Here!?" Polly shouted as she busts open the door. Domino 2 screeches, ready to attack. Polly screams and the Plantars run out of the basement.

Darrel was about to leave, but saw Anne trying to calm it down. "Domino 2? It's me Anne." Domino 2 calmed down, and landed in front of Anne. "We've bonded, I gave you treats. You gave me dead things." Anne walked up and placed her hand on Domino 2. "Don't you remember?"

But, Domino 2 was too hungry to resist instincts. She blows Anne and Darrel out of the way, knocking Darrel into a pile of boxes. The boxes pinned Darrel to the floor, and he could only watch as Anne ran up with the toy mouse in her hand.

"Anne! Don't do this!" he cried. But Anne didn't hear him. He tried to free himself from the boxes, but he couldn't. The boxes were too heavy to push off his back. Darrel grunted in frustration, until he remembered what Tint told him about magic. 'Magic can encase our every action with our permission.'

Darrel decided to try and perform magic to get the crates off him. He closes his eyes and focuses his energy performing a levitation spell. The magic flows in his heart, and creates an aura making the crates float up.

Darrel crawls out, takes his staff, and runs out to find Anne. Cronaxx and Tint arrive just as Darrel ran out. "Hop pop, what happened?" Tint asked. "A giant monster almost ate us," Polly replied.

Out in the wilderness, Darrel rushes out and finds Anne trapped and Domino 2 closing in on her. Darrel cries out, "NO! ANNE!" Then, Darrel's staff glows bright green and gets in front of Anne. "Leave

her alone!" he shouted. Domino 2 stares at the staff and suddenly sits down.

Darrel watches in awe as he uses magic to stall the beast. "I'm sorry Darrel," said Anne. "I thought I could change her. But I guess I was wrong." Darrel nodded, "It's okay Anne, let's just keep her as far away from the Plantars as possible."

Anne looks at the toy mouse she used to lure Domino 2 out of the house. Then remembers all the good times she had with her. She closed her eyes and said, "It's time to go."

Darrel breaks the spell, and Anne throws the toy mouse. Domino 2 flies after it, and disappears in the trees. Darrel walks up to Anne's side and the two humans fall on their knees. "Sayonara, Domino 2." "I'm sorry Anne," said Darrel. "For what it's worth, I miss your cat too." With tears in her eyes Anne hugs Darrel, and Darrel embraces.

Back at the Plantars, Hop pop, Cronaxx, and Tint proceed to gather up all the cobwebs Domino 2 left behind. "And look who's cleaning up after the pet, good ol' Hop pop that's who."

"Technically it's a predator, not a pet," said Darrel as he and Anne arrived back safely. "Hey," said Anne in a depressed way. "Guys! You're okay!" Sprig cheered. "Tell me that thing is gone," cried Polly.

Darrel nodded, "Yeah it's gone, Polly." Anne put her hand on her arm and said, "I'm so sorry guys. I had no right to put you all in danger. No matter how much I miss my cat. I hope you understand."

Hop pop looks ready to yell at Anne, "Understand? Understand?!" until he reveals bottled up tears in his eyes. "I miss Charlie Big-Bottom with all my heart and soul!" He cries his heart out and Darrel gives him a hug. Polly kills the mood saying, "Can we please fix the GIANT HOLE IN THE HOUSE?!"

The very next day, Anne was sweeping the cobwebs off the walls and floors. Darrel comes down along with Sprig. Anne looks at them

and says, "Just goes to show you. You can't take some wild animal you found in the woods, have it live in your basement, and think everything's going to be okay."

Sprig and Darrel look at each other and smile, "I don't know," said Sprig. "Sometimes it works out." Anne looks at her living quarters and realizes, "You're talking about me right?"

Darrel shrugs, "Maybe. Oh, Anne? Sprig and I made you something." Darrel shows Anne a stuffed replica of Domino 2 with buttons for eyes. "Sprig helped me collect Domino 2's hairballs to make this."

Darrel gives the stuffed animal to Anne, "Is it okay?" Anne stared down at what Darrel and Sprig made for them. "Do you hate it?" Sprig asked. Then, out of nowhere, Anne hugs the stuffed animal along with Darrel and Sprig. "I LOVE IT!" she cried. Sprig was shocked, but Darrel was happy.

Back in Bessie's Stable, Darrel was relieved that he and Anne got to live another day. "I'm very impressed," said Cronaxx. "Your desire to save your friend, helped unlock your abilities to tame that mighty beast." Darrel shrugged, "I guess in a way, my heart asked the magic for help." "We should keep practicing that focus, so you can perform magic whenever you want," said Tint. "That's not such a bad idea," said Darrel. The two rushed out of the stable and went to an open field to help Darrel practice.

Energizing Quest

Chapter 6 - Energizing Quest

One day, life at the Plantar farm was slow. Darrel and the Salamanders finished magic training for the day and went into the Plantar's house to relax. Cronaxx went into the kitchen for a cup of water. Tint takes off his neckerchief and practices basic handkerchief tricks. Darrel sat upside down feeling bored out of his mind.

Hop pop sat beside him. "You know that's not how we sit in this house," he said. Darrel breaks out of his bored trance and sits back up.

"I'm sorry, Hop pop," said Darrel. "It's just that there's nothing for me to do in my spare time." "Well there's plenty of things to do around here, Darrel," said Hop pop. "But, what do you usually do in your spare time?"

Sprig, Polly, and Tint sit on the couch beside them. "Back home, when I finish my homework, I play things called video games and watch movies. Whenever I have a creative thought, I use them to make my videos and publish them."

"Wow, guess life where you're from is much more simpler," said Sprig. "It's not Sprig, it's just as difficult as it is in this world," said Darrel.

"It may not be the same, but I know what I do when I'm bored," said Hop pop. He gets up from his seat and takes a book from his study. "Whenever I finish a hard day's work, I spend my spare time reading fictional novels."

Cronaxx smiled, "Here's another lesson, Darrel: Vision is the art of seeing things invisible." Darrel looked at his mentor, and raised his brow with curiosity. Hop pop gives Darrel a book about adventure

and said, "Just give this a few pages, and maybe you'll understand your new lesson." Darrel smiles and opens up the book.

Later that day, Darrel has gotten into the book. The same time, Sprig and Polly were playing together. Until, "AAAAHHHHH!" The group hears a scream in the basement.

Anne pops out of the door, her phone in hand, looking all excited. "Guys guys guys guys guys! Look!"

The Amphibians look at her phone with confusion, "What are we looking at here?" asked Polly. Darrel glances at her phone and suddenly zips in front of her screen. "NO WAY!" he cried.

"What is it, Darrel?" Tint asked. Anne shows her phone with a title 'Suspicion Island' in front. "Suspicion Island," replied Darrel. "It's like our favorite show back home," said Anne. "Me, Darrel, Sasha, and Marcy used to watch it all the time."

"I got the new season and didn't even know it." said Anne. "It must've auto downloaded when I got here." Darrel was hyped, "The new season?!" Sprig and Polly were confused, "Who's this Auto?" "And how did you 'download' him?"

"Just watch," said Anne as she pressed her phone, starting the video. The video showed more humans, surprising the Plantars and the Salamanders. "They have noses," Polly laughed.

After the preview, the kids were fascinated. Cronaxx was slightly amused. But for Hop pop, "What is this demonic nonsense?" "Hop pop, this shows got beautiful, people doing dumb things, while stuff explodes!" Anne replied.

"It's an amazing show," said Darrel. "Sasha used to host these back home, and she usually gives me the best seat. However, she sits with Anne and Marcy behind me. I thought it was a personal space issue, but I always thought it would be special to share these moments with those close to you."

Anne looked at her phone, feeling guilty, until she came up with an idea. "Well, why don't we make one of these moments? As we watch the first episode together!" Darrel shot a look in amazement, "Really?! What do the rest of you guys think?"

Tint, Sprig and Polly were already on board. Cronaxx shrugged, "I guess it couldn't hurt to view this suspicious island." But Hop pop protested, "Now hold on everyone! Instead of that garbage, how about I treat you to some real entertainment?"

He takes out a scroll and announces, "A scene from 'The Shallow Pond,'" he clears his throat, "Sadness. The world is Sadness. But look, there, a pond! Is it deep or shallow?" At the end of the scene, the room stood quiet.

"I propose we take a vote," said Tint. "All in favor of Suspicion Island? Raise your hand." The whole group except for Hop pop raised their hands. Hop pop, outmatched by a reasonable vote, gave in. "Okay fine. But just one episode!"

The kids cheered and Anne set up her phone in front of the couch. Anne looks to Darrel, remembering what he said offered a spot next to her. "Are you sure, Anne?" Darrel asked. "We're creating a special moment where we get to watch the first episode of the new season together. Get in here." said Anne. Darrel sits next to Anne smiling, and she pushes play on her phone.

For the rest of the night, the group watched more than just one episode of Suspicion Island. The group stare into the phone like they haven't blinked all day. Hop pop however, was still unamused. When the episode ended, Anne paused her phone.

"And that's enough for tonight," she announced. The kids, except for Darrel groaned. "Are you sure?" Tint asked. Darrel nodded, "Don't worry Tint, we'll pick up where we left off another time. Hopefully, tomorrow."

"Darrel's right guys," said Anne. "You gotta pace yourself with this stuff." Feeling a bit relieved, Hop pop said, "Alright everyone, off to bed." Tint and Cronaxx returned to the stables, while Sprig and Polly complained about wanting to know what happened next.

Darrel, Anne, and Hop pop were the only ones left sitting in the living room. "So what do you think Hop pop?" Anne asked with a grin. "Better than that boring stuff you read to us right?"

Hop pop stood up and said, "That boring stuff is called literature, Anne. And maybe if you had an ounce of culture, you wouldn't reject it in favor of your substandard, puerile, garbage show!"

Hop pop slams the door into his study leaving Anne and Darrel left alone. "Don't take it so hard Anne," said Darrel. "Everybody's a critic." Anne shrugged her shoulders. "I know."

Anne and Darrel simultaneously yawn and prepare to get some sleep. Before Darrel could return to Bessie's stable, he turned to Anne. "Thanks for hosting Suspicion Island Anne, I had a fun time." Anne smiled, "Well hope you're in for more tomorrow, cuz we're going to pick up where we left off." "Depends on what I have planned tomorrow," said Darrel as he left the house.

Darrel makes his way to the stable, smiling with glee, 'That was the best night I had. Watching Suspicion Island with Anne was more fun than when Sasha hosted these events.' He enters the stables and falls fast asleep.

The next morning, Darrel wakes up feeling recharged from last night. He spots the salamanders getting ready to hike out of the farm. "Good morning, Darrel," said Tint. "We're going to explore the misty peaks today."

"What are we going to find there?" Darrel asked. "Elemental strength for the Eternal Staff," replied Cronaxx. "There's word that a creature living in those lands harnesses the power of lightning." Darrel and

Tint gaze in thought. "If we could get close enough to this creature, the Staff can call upon this element," said Tint.

Darrel smiled, "Let's get some breakfast and be on our way." The three enter the house, at the same time Anne turns on her phone to watch another episode. However, when she turned it on, she got a notification that her battery was low, surprising her.

Darrel was concerned for his friend immediately, "Anne what's wrong?" This got the attention of the Plantars as well. "My battery is low," said Anne. "But it was fine last night, when I turned it off."

She opens her phone to find that the rest of the episodes from the season have been watched. "Huh? Watched? Who watched all these episodes and used up all the-" Before she could speak anymore, her phone immediately goes off. "No no no no no no no no!"

Anne was left stunned, "it's gone." "What's gone?" Sprig asked. "Pretty much everything on her phone, Sprig," replied Darrel. "Her pictures, her texts." "Videos of MY CAT!" Anne cried. "Now all of my memories from home are gone!"

Anne hyperventilates, knees to her face, and upset that without electricity, she can't view her phone ever again. Darrel was upset seeing her friend like this. Looking back at the Salamanders, Darrel realized something.

But before he could talk, Anne started pointing fingers. "Was it you!?" Anne asked, pointing at Sprig. "What?! No!" Sprig replied. "I didn't watch anything," he points to his sister Polly. "It must've been Polly."

Polly was shocked at the accusation, "What?" "I even heard her get up in the night," said Sprig. "Very suspicious." Polly retaliated, "I needed to PEE! Plus if you heard me, you were awake too. YOU'RE THE SUSPICIOUS ONE!"

Sprig angrily glared at his sister, "Don't change the suspect." However, Polly did exactly that, "Wait wait wait. What about..." she points at Darrel and the Salamanders. "One of them?!"

Tint and Darrel gasped, Cronaxx however was unamused. "I would never poke around my friends' stuff," said Darrel. "We were in your snail's stable the whole night," said Tint. "You know, Hop pop could have done it as well," said Cronaxx.

"Me? Puh," said Hop pop. "In case you all forgot, I despise that garbage." Cronaxx squinted his eyes and said, "Usually it's the one we least expect to use her phone."

Darrel nodded, "Stuff like that does actually happen. It could be you, Hop pop." Hop pop shook his head, "That's preposterous!"

Having enough of the arguing, Anne stood up and said, "Enough! If none of you are going to admit to it, the least you could do is help me fix my phone!"

The frogs squint their eyes at each other before Hop pop spoke up, "Fair enough, Anne. How do we bring this thing back to life? Magic? Live sacrifice? I know a guy in town..."

"We need to find a creature," said Darrel. Anne and the frogs turn their attention on him. "How is a creature going to fix my phone?" Anne asked. "Because this creature zaps lightning," said Darrel. "I think I know what creature you're talking about," said Hop pop. "Quickly, to my study!"

In Hop pop's study, he opens a book on rare creatures. "I've heard talk of a creature called the Zapapede, that lives deep in the Misty Peaks." He points to the creature's location in his book. "It zaps its prey with a small spark of lightning. It's pretty cool actually."

"We just need to get close to one of those things with my Staff," said Darrel. "If we can get it to zap the Staff, then the Staff will harness the power of lightning. It'll be like carrying an ultimate battery."

"Sounds like it's worth a shot," said Anne. "How far away is this bug HP?" "Don't call me HP," said Hop pop. "It's half a day's travel. But that should be no trouble for this gang."

"Oh yeah," said Sprig glaring at Hop pop. "Well that's just what Chad Vanderblood said. Right before he was stabbed in the back! By a Backstabber! ON SUSPICION ISLAND!"

Sprig kept pointing his fingers at Hop pop while he kept constantly swatting them away. Poly jumped off Sprig's head and said, "I would never stab Chad in the back. But one of you two would!"

"Guys," said Tint. "We're not going to get Anne's phone fixed if we keep arguing! Keep your thoughts to yourselves. Because as far as I'm concerned, we're all suspicious."

"Tint is right," said Cronaxx. "We need to get moving while it's still daytime." "He's right," said Anne as she walked out the study. "The sooner we move, the sooner I get my memories back."

Darrel followed her out of the house shortly after. "It's gonna be okay Anne." Anne turned back to Darrel, "Are you sure?" Darrel nodded, "I promise we're going to get your phone fixed."

Anne squinted at Darrel, "You didn't use my phone, did you?"

Darrel shook his head and pulled something out of his pocket. It was his own phone. "I lost all my battery when I didn't charge it before school. I tried calling for help, but it was useless, and it just turned off. I was upset because all my work, my pictures with you guys and my family are gone. There was no way I was going to use your phone, because I didn't want you to feel how I felt when I lost my memories."

Anne expressed a guilty look on her face and said, "I'm sorry I almost accused you of using my phone." Darrel smiled, "It's okay Anne, because we're going to fix it." The amphibians exit the house and the group sets off to the Misty Peaks

Along the way, Sprig took out his fiddle and started playing. Tint took out his flute and played along with him.

Suspicious Isling - (Sprig Plantar)

My family distrusts each other,

On a dangerous mission,

Like the nearly-naked humans

on the island of Suspicion,

Peruvia, Felicia, and Randy - So hot!

Beguiling, hostiling,

We're all suspicious isling!

"You can stop playing now boys," said Cronaxx. "We're here." The group stop in their tracks as Hop pop points out. "Look. There's one now."

The group looks toward the Misty Peaks and spots a Zapapede resting. It's yellow with eye pupils in the shape of a positive and negative symbol and sparks electricity from its antennas. "Huh, looks pretty cute," said Anne.

Tint looks at an old bridge that stands between them and the Zapapede. "This bridge looks too rickety," said Tint. "It can't hold all of us," said Cronaxx. "Me and the Salamanders will go first," said Darrel. "The rest of you can follow us after."

Darrel and the Salamanders reach the other side of the bridge carefully, trying not to wake up their sleeping bug. Darrel nodded at Anne and the Plantars, giving them the go ahead to get across.

As he turned back around, he looked up at the Zapapede. The insect looked back at him as he drew closer. The Zapapede zapped

lightning more quickly, preparing to attack its trespasser. Darrel took his staff and prepared to point it at its antennas.

But before he could, he heard a loud snap. The bridge broke and the Plantars fell. Darrel was scared, "ANNE!" The clouds disappear showing them that they're still alive. "Are you guys okay!?" Tint shouted. "Rope bridge? More like Nope bridge," said Anne. "Just hang on! We'll climb down to you," said Darrel.

Darrel got both the Salamanders to climb on his back and he climbed down the chasm carefully. He gets to the bottom and rushes to Anne. "Anne. Are you okay?" Anne places her hand on her head. "Yeah, I think so. Good thing I landed on this bush."

Darrel looks at her and breathes in relief. "Other than a few cuts and bruises, you'll be okay." "But you didn't get to the Zapapede," said Anne. "Anne, the Zapapede is the least of my worries," said Darrel. "You are more important to me than getting more power for my staff." Anne smiled at his dedication and concern. "Thanks, Darrel."

As Hop pop comes to, he looks down and says, "Look, down there. More Zapapedes." The group looks down to find a colony of Zapapedes all feisty from the bridge falling on them.

"They're pretty far down," said Hop pop. "And angry," said Tint. "How are we going to reach them?" The group started thinking of an idea.

"Oh," said Anne, "Let's just link arms and lower someone down, just like the teens did in episode eight." "Sounds simple enough," said Darrel. "I'll go down there."

"Puh," said Sprig. "So that Polly can drop us to cover her tracks, just like Vivica did in the very same episode?" That question made Polly angry. "You calling me Vivica?!" Sprig rolled his eyes to annoy her more and said, "Maybe.."

That's when Polly and Sprig started fighting. It started to become more violent and the rest of the group was having enough of it.

"Alright, cut it out you guys!" Anne said, before Sprig accidentally kicked her in the face.

Darrel gasped, which got Tint's attention, "Don't get angry at them Darrel," said Cronaxx. "It was just an accident." Darrel shook his head, "It's not Anne I'm worried about here." "It's not?" Tint asked. "Last time someone did that back home, Anne attacked them."

They hear Anne's battle cry and she attacks Sprig and Polly. Not wanting anyone to get in more trouble, Darrel and Tint come over to break up the fight. Hop pop watches in agony, and Cronaxx looks at him with a disappointed glare. As if he knows something the rest of the group doesn't.

Hop pop caves in and shouts, "IT WAS MEEEEEEE!" His shout was heard across the chasm. Cronaxx smiled, "I knew it."

The kids looked to Hop pop. "It was you?" Darrel asked. Hop pop nodded, "That's right, I watched all the episodes. Every. Single. One." "But you hated Suspicion Island," said Anne. "Hated it?" Hop pop asked. "Hated it? I LOVED IT!"

So Hop pop explained that after watching the last episode, he could hardly sleep. So he snuck in the living room to get the closure and find out what happened next. He thought he would be able to watch one, but the show had his hooks in him. And before he knew it, he finished the season.

At the end of his tale, he covered his tracks, and the kids were dazzled by the surprising twist. "What did I tell you all?" Darrel asked. "It's the one you least suspect."

"But now, I'm going to make things right," said Hop pop. He takes Anne's phone and shouts, "I WILL REDEEM MYSELF!" He jumps into the Zapapede colony, and the group looks with shock.

Hop pop apparently landed softly. Until he was getting zapped multiple times. "He can't last much longer!" Sprig cried. "We have to

work together!" Polly shouted.

The team linked arms and lowered Darrel down close enough to get to Hop pop. As he grabbed his arm, he suddenly realized something too late. As the Zapapede shocks Hop pop the electricity passes through to Darrel, to Anne, then to the rest of the group.

Before long, they are shot out of the nest and fly back to higher ground. The group is all charred and burnt from the shocks they were given. Hop pop looks to Anne's phone and the battery is charged up to ten thousand percent. "Holy smokes, that's a lot of percent."

Anne looked to Darrel to find him face down, covered in soot. "Darrel?" She rushes to his side and flips him over. "Darrel? Can you hear me?" Darrel didn't respond, until he coughed the soot out of his mouth. "Rough landing," he said.

Anne smiled seeing that he was okay. "Are you okay Darrel?" Anne asked. "I'm a little cooked, but other than that I'm fine." He looks to Hop pop holding onto her phone. "At least we got your phone charged."

Suddenly, Anne hugged Darrel, surprising him. "My phone is the least of my worries. You're important to me too. You're my friend." Darrel returned Anne's hug and said, "I'll always be your friend."

The two let go and look to Hop pop with a smile. "So, you love Suspicion Island, huh?" Anne asked. Hop pop looked away in guilt and confessed. "Yeah, and I'm sorry I lied and drained your memory box. Can you ever forgive this old, silly frog?"

"Dude, you just risked your life to recharge her phone," said Darrel. "Plus, you helped give my staff the power of lightning." Darrel shows his staff sparking with electricity. "I think you two are square, and I owe you one."

Suddenly, Darrel's pocket vibrates. He reaches in finding his phone charged up as well. "Alright! My phone is charged too." Even though his phone charged, he turned it off anyway.

"Now that the staff has the power of lightning, you can call upon the element whenever you want," said Cronaxx. "That's good to know," said Darrel.

"Alright everyone, enough fiddle faddleing," said Hop pop. "We gotta get home so you all can finish the season. If I don't talk to someone about it soon, I'm going to explode." The group turns away from the Misty Peaks and journeys home. "I mean that part when the island itself is actually revealed to be-

Before Hop pop could talk anymore, the kids spoke up, "NO!" "DON'T SAY ANYTHING!" "DUDE SPOILERS!"

For the rest of the journey, the group remained quiet on the trip back. Darrel and Anne walked side by side, and they didn't even realize how close they were.

Back in the Plantar Farm, they started watching Suspicion Island. Tint and Cronaxx went into the stable to take a break from the show. While the Plantars suddenly dozed off. That just left Anne and Darrel watching Suspicion Island together.

Darrel soon grew tired and unknowingly fell asleep on Anne's shoulder. She looks down on him and smiles. 'He's really cute when he sleeps,' she thought. 'Wait! What am I thinking? He's Sasha's boyfriend. Still, is it wrong to crush on your friend's boyfriend?' She pushed her thoughts back in her mind and drifted off to sleep when she turned off her phone.

Snail Trail

Chapter 7 - Snail Trail

On another sunny day in Amphibia, the gang decided to go out of the farm for a while. They were out on the road with their snail companion, Bessie. Hop pop was driving her, while the kids were sitting by his sides. Polly was sitting on Hop pop's head. Darrel and the Salamanders were sitting behind them on Bessie's shell.

"Ahh, a leisurely outing with Bessie," said Hop pop. "Why we could really go anywhere, do anything."

That's when Sprig got an idea, "Oh oh, can we get swamp slushies? They have new flavors." Hop pop just laughed it off and said no.

Then, Polly decided on something else, "Can we go off roads? Do some crazy stunts?" Hop pop also had to say no to that. "Double no."

Suddenly, Anne asked Hop pop, "Oh, can I drive?"

Darrel rolled his eyes from behind, 'Come on, Anne. You really think Hop pop's going to say yes?' Darrel thought. But, Hop pop said something that surprised him. "Sure."

Anne didn't listen to his response and said, "Oh, come on Hop pop." Darrel snapped her out of it. "Anne, Hop pop just said yes."

"He did?" Anne asked. "Absolutely," said Hop pop. "I've been trying to teach this guy for years." He points to Sprig, and Sprig nods, "It's true."

"Even you can learn to drive Bessie, Darrel," said Hop pop. Now Darrel really was surprised. "You really mean it, Hop pop?" Hop pop nodded, "Of course. I've seen how you tend to Bessie when you

prepare for farm work every day. If Bessie trusts you, then so should I."

Darrel smiled, and so did Anne. "What do you say Anne?" Darrel asked. "Wanna learn how to drive Bessie?" "You bet," said Anne. "Give us those reins, Hop pop. We're ready to drive."

However, their lesson was to be far more complicated than that. As they got back to the farm, Hop pop plops a large book on a tree stump. "Not before reading this, you both ain't," he said.

"What is that?" Darrel asked. "That is Bessie's history," replied Hop pop. "Before touching a snail's reins, you got to know them. Feel their heartbeat next to yours, and become one."

Darrel opens the book and flips through a section. "Wow, I didn't know Bessie had history," he said in amazement. Anne, however, wasn't having any of it. "Hop pop, it's just a vehicle. We have a family car back home, it's no biggie." That's when Darrel put the book down and turned to Anne. "Anne, owning a snail that big is like owning a horse on a ranch. You can't treat an animal like it's an inanimate object."

"He's right," said Cronaxx. "So unless you want to end up caught in a slimy situation, I would suggest taking Hop pop's advice and read Bessie's history. Cover to Cover."

Hop pop nodded to the wizard's statement, but Anne felt nervous for having to read a whole book. "Are there pictures?" Anne asked. "There are diagrams," Hop pop replied. Anne shouted at the top of her lungs, "NOOOO!"

"Dramatic much?" Hop pop asked. "Now if you all would excuse me, Polly's due for a wash." He takes Polly out of a mud puddle and makes his way back to the house. Polly shouts the whole way, "I'll just get dirty again. You can't stop me! I learned this from watching you Anne!"

Cronaxx gives off a yawn, "Since we're back, I'm gonna rest my eyes." He looks to Darrel and Tint. "You kids stay out of trouble okay?" Darrel and Tint nodded, "We promise, Uncle Cronaxx."

As Cronaxx left, Anne groaned and sulked with the book in her hands. "I'll be old before I finish reading this thing." "Depends on how much you want to drive Bessie," said Tint. "Yeah, page five is as far as I got," said Sprig. "So much description, not enough plot."

Anne decided not to read the book, and put it in Bessie's satchel. "This is ridiculous. I don't need history, I need experience." She gets on Bessie's saddle and comes up with a devious idea. "Hey, what do you guys say we take this for a harmless test drive? Prove to Hop pop we're fast learners?"

Anne reaches out to the three boys, but Darrel wants no part of it. "No no no no no no. I'm not running before I'm walking." "Darrel's right," said Tint. "Riding a snail is like performing a magic formula. You need to know how to finish what you started."

"I got a feeling you got that from your uncle," said Darrel. "Oh, I did. Believe me," said Tint. "So, this could be a situation that we'll look back and say, 'ooh boy, we probably shouldn't have done that?'" Sprig asked.

Anne was able to convince Sprig with his weakness. "We'll get swamp slushies while we're out." Sprig hops onto Bessie's shell and says, "No regrets!" Then, Tint gave in. "Well, I kinda am getting thirsty." He climbs onto Bessie's shell next to Sprig.

Now all that's left was Darrel who stood with his arms crossed and his staff in his hand. He looks to the three with smiles on their faces. He knows in his gut that they're going to get into trouble. He smiles and sighs in defeat. "If we get into trouble, I'll do what I can to help get us out." He climbs up Bessie's shell and sits next to Anne.

"That's what I like to hear," said Anne. She whips the reins and Bessie starts to move. The four kids cheered down the road, passing

other drivers. Sprig tried his hand at road raging against an elderly frog driving a ladybug. The results were exhilarating. Tint was just poking his head out of the side of the shell to feel the wind flow through his skin. As for Darrel, he starts reading Bessie's history just in case they run into trouble.

"Are you actually reading that phonebook?" Anne asked. "I want to," said Darrel. "I like to see how Bessie joined the Plantars in the first place." Anne scoffed, "Bookworm." Darrel ignored her criticism and dove back into the book.

The kids get swamp slushies, as Anne promised. Then, Anne takes Bessie off road, surprising Tint. Darrel was nose deep in the book, he didn't pay attention to what was going on.

Eventually, the group got winded and they decided to get back on the main road. But Bessie wasn't moving, instead she was hiding in her shell. The stillness grabbed Darrel's attention at last. "What's going on? Is Bessie okay?" Darrel asked.

"That's what we're trying to figure out, Darrel," said Sprig. "Yeah, I mean is there no fuel in the tank? Is the oil low?" Anne asked. Darrel chuckled, "You seriously think a snail needs fuel and oil?"

"Maybe we can push her? Give her a jump start?" Anne asked. "Maybe we can," said Tint. The four get behind Bessie's shell and try pushing her. But the shell wouldn't budge.

"Whew! That snail is strong," said Darrel. "Can't you levitate it with your magic, Darrel?" Anne asked. "I can try," Darrel replied. He takes his staff and points it at Bessie's shell. The eternal staff gives off a faint red glow, surrounding Bessie. But Darrel couldn't budge her.

Eventually, Darrel stops. "She won't cooperate," he said. "What do you mean?" Sprig asked. "For the levitating spell to work, the caster must link minds with who he casted," said Tint. "Bessie's mind, however, is tucked deep in her shell. So she's not going anywhere."

"What are we going to do?" Sprig asked. "We're stuck." Anne sighed in defeat, "We have no choice, I'll stay here with Bessie while you guys hitch a ride back to the farm. And... ugh. Go get Hop pop."

Darrel looked at his friend and said, "I'll stay here too, in case something goes wrong." "You sure Darrel?" Anne asked. "Who else is going to keep you from going nuts, being all alone?" Darrel smirked. This gave Anne a few chuckles.

"Okay, Sprig it's up to us. Let's go!" Tint cried. "We'll be back in a flash," said Sprig. Tint grabs on to Sprig as he launches his tongue to a tree and hops off.

Now only the two humans remain with the hidden snail. As the two waited, they watched ants marching by, clouds floating in and out of their eyesight, but they soon got really bored so quickly.

Darrel soon realized that Anne is at a point to read anything. He immediately came up with an idea. "You know, there may be a reason Bessie is hiding in her shell." Anne perked up, "There is?" Darrel takes out Bessie's history, making Anne groan. "I found the answer while we were driving Bessie. But, I forgot what page it was on. Perhaps if we could read this together, maybe it'll help us get home."

Anne grew hesitant, she still didn't want to read Hop pop's phone book. However, Darrel wanted to help her get rid of her boredom. "Do you remember when we first met?" Anne perked up, "Yeah. It was shortly after you met Sasha in the first grade."

Darrel nodded, "It was recess, and I was trying to read my favorite book..."

(Flashback)

It was recess time, one of the kids favorite times of the day during school. Kids were playing four-square, swinging on the swingsets, climbing on the jungle gym, even playing ball on the fields. In the

midst of all the physical fun, Darrel was sitting by himself under a tree.

He was trying to read his favorite book, but was struggling to focus on the words. He was more mesmerized with the images. And because he struggled with reading, he hardly ever spoke.

While he tried to read, Sasha came up to him. "Hey Darrel," she said. Darrel looked up with a shy smile. He waved hello. "There's someone I like you to meet. I think she could help you learn how to read."

Darrel looked confused, then Sasha brought Anne to her side. "Darrel, this is Anne Boonchuy. Anne, this is Darrel. The boy I saved from a couple of bullies." Darrel smiled shyly and waved hi. "Hi Darrel," said Anne. "Whatcha reading?" Darrel closed his book and showed her the title: The Wizard, the Knight, and the Dragon.

"That has great pictures," said Anne. Darrel nodded, as Anne and Sasha sat down by his sides. Anne starts to read from the book, and Darrel listens. "The wizard traveled far and wide. Through dark tunnels and steep hills. The wizard meets the knight and says-

Before Anne could say anymore, Sasha stopped her and pointed to what the wizard said to Darrel. "Read what the wizard said." Darrel looked at the words Sasha was pointing. He looked at the words as if they looked like strange symbols. Anne gestured to him to breathe slowly. He did that, and saw the words clearly. He started to put the words together, and slowly said, "Brave knight, I have come to aid you on a quest!"

Anne smiled, "That's it. Now what does this say?" Anne points to another set of words and Darrel slowly reads out loud. Sasha smiled at Anne helping out Darrel. And smiled at Darrel for making progress. For the rest of recess, the three kept reading Darrel's favorite book.

(Flashback ends)

"If it weren't for you, I would've failed reading and english class," said Darrel. The two sat side by side, next to Bessie's shell. Anne smiled, "I'm amazed you remember that day." "It was the day you helped me," said Darrel. "And now I want to help you, by reading that phone book."

Anne knew that Darrel wanted to help her out, "You sure you know that the answer is in that book?" Darrel nodded. "You know what I do with books that have no pictures? I visualize the words in my head as an actual movie. Give it a try." Darrel opens the book to the very first page and the two start reading.

Later in the day, the two got into Bessie's history. They ate leaves as snack food, they laughed, they cried, but in the end, they started to understand Bessie. There were times, each unaware, that they looked at each other while they were reading.

Eventually, they read something important. "The reason Bessie had hidden in her shell, was now clear to me," Anne read. "A predator was close," "That's it!" cried Darrel. "And not just any predator, a natural enemy of snails."

Then, out of nowhere, they hear rustling not far from where they were sitting. "Uhh, hello?" Anne called. "Sprig? Tint? Is that you?" Darrel asked. The two look to the book for more information on snail predators.

They find a diagram of what looks like a hedgehog. "Aw, it's actually pretty cute," said Anne. "What's so scary about that?" Darrel asked.

Suddenly, a vicious looking hedgehog scared them, just as they put the book down. As they looked around, they realized they're not alone. More hedgehogs came out of hiding and started circling around the two humans.

Anne and Darrel climb on top of Bessie's shell, trying to fend off the hedgehogs. Darrel uses his staff to whack the hedgehogs. "Is there

any way to get her moving again?" Darrel asked. Anne flipped through the pages and found out what to do.

"Darrel, hold on," she said. Not bothering to ask questions, Darrel held onto Bessie's shell. Then, Anne cried, "Bessie! Things are gettin' MESSY!"

Bessie pops out of her shell, and zooms out of the hedgehog's circle. The two humans cheer as they ride back to the main road. However, the hedgehogs weren't going to let them go so easily. "Eat our dust, hedgehogs!" Anne shouted.

Darrel saw one of them about to shoot their quills. "Get down!" he cried. He grabs Anne's arm and pulls her down just as the quills hit the seat. "Woah, thanks Darrel," she said. "Don't celebrate until we're out of here," he replied.

The chase lasted a while longer, until Anne read more on how to escape the hedgehogs. She opened up Bessie's front shell and grabbed a sack. "Darrel. On my go, freeze outside Bessie's snail trial," said Anne.

Darrel nodded, "Alright." Anne climbed on Bessie's neck, as Darrel climbed on the back of her shell. "Let's do this thing, Bessie!" Anne cried. Bessie chirped in response and ate the berries.

As she did, Bessie spewed out pink slime. "Darrel, now!" Darrel heard Anne's signal and casted an ice spell from his hand. The ice and slime made the hedgehogs slip and slide. Bessie turned onto the main road and the hedgehogs slipped out of sight.

Darrel and Anne cheered, "Yeah! We sure showed them!" "Way to go, Bessie! You are the Queen of the Road." Bessie chirped as Anne hugged their snail companion. "You too, Anne," said Darrel.

Anne looked at him with surprise. "If you hadn't read more of Bessie's history, then all three of us would've been hedgehog chow." He strokes Bessie's neck, making her pur. "It was your quick

thinking, and devotion to riding Bessie that saved us. Me? I just did what you told me to do. You are amazing, Anne."

Anne blushed with glee, "Aww, thanks Darrel." Darrel smiled and replied, "You're welcome. Now let's find Sprig and Tint, and get back to the farm." Darrel climbed onto Bessie's shell and sat next to Anne. She gave a whip on the reins and the three set off on the main road.

As they journey back, they find that Sprig and Tint found help and were given a lift back as well. But as it turns out, they were stuck on the same ladybug being driven by the same elderly frog they drove past. Her name is Mrs. Croaker. She finished singing a song Tint tuned himself out of, and drove Sprig almost insane.

Anne drives Bessie alongside them, "Any of you guys need a lift?" Tint opens his eyes and climbs onto Bessie. "You betcha," he said. "Guys!" Sprig cired, "Thank goodness." He hops up and hugs Anne tightly, finally free from Mrs. Croaker's slow moving vehicle.

"Thanks for giving us a lift, Mrs. Croaker," said Tint. "You're welcome, boys," she replied. "But next time, try to keep that road rage in check." Then she whipped her reins and the ladybug zoomed past the group, leaving them shocked. "Guess she played us good," said Darrel. "That woman is everything I want to be," said Anne.

The four ride back to the Plantar farm, completely exhausted. "We made it!" Sprig cheered. "And it looks like Hop pop is still washing Polly." He looks into the window watching Polly escaping Hop pop, and getting filthy again.

Suddenly, a voice was heard behind them, "Ahem." The four look behind to see Cronaxx smiling mischievously. "Oh crud," said Anne. "We're busted for sure," said Sprig.

"So, how was your little joyride?" Cronaxx asked. "What? We didn't go on any joyride," said Sprig, trying his best to hide the truth. "Yep, we were here this whole time," said Anne sweating.

Cronaxx just smirked, and Tint and Darrel sighed. "It was quite a blast," said Tint. Darrel nodded in defeat. "Any trouble along the way?" Cronaxx asked. "Just some predators," said Darrel. "But, we escaped thanks to Anne's quick thinking."

"Look, if anything, it was my fault," said Anne. "I convinced them to come along-" Cronaxx just put his hand up signaling Anne to stop talking. "As long as you guys don't do anything like that again, I won't say anything. Besides, Tint told me telepathically that he and Sprig were safe from the predators."

"How did you do that, Tint?" Sprig asked. "Remember when I sat patiently on Mrs. Croaker's ride?" Tint replied. Sprig recalls their ride and puts the pieces together. "Oh, okay."

"Now come on, kids," said Cronaxx. "It's getting late. We should get some rest." "Okay Uncle Cronaxx," said Tint. Both he and Sprig prepare to turn in for the night. "You guys coming?" Sprig asked Anne and Darrel. "I think I'm gonna spend a little more time with ol' Bessie, here," replied Anne. "Make that both of us," said Darrel. "Suit yourselves," said Tint as he makes his way back to the stable.

Anne and Darrel had Bessie all to themselves. Darrel looks to Anne as takes out Bessie's History. "Have I told you I read the whole thing?" asked Darrel. "You what?" Anne asked surprisingly. "I told you, if it weren't for you, I would've failed reading and english," said Darrel with a smirk. "You cheeky bookworm," said Anne.

Darrel sits on Bessie's side while Anne sits on top, ready to read more of Bessie's History. "Now where were we?" Darrel looks to the stars until, "Hey Darrel, thanks for motivating me to read more of this," said Anne. " You're awesome." Darrel smiled as the Eternal Staff glowed a shade of pink. 'You really are amazing in many ways, Anne Boonchuy,' he thought.

The very next morning, the two enter Hop pop's bedroom all tired from reading Bessie's History. Anne throws the book onto Hop pop, waking him up. "What the hey-" Hop pop looked at the tired humans.

"Good morning Hopediah," said Anne in a groggy tone. "Anne? Darrel?" "We did it, Hop pop," said Darrel. "We both read the whole thing all in one day. Anne read it in one night,"

"Impressive," said Hop pop. "Kind of scary, but impressive." Anne slouched back onto Hop pop's chair as Darrel leaned into it from behind. "I was wrong about Bessie," said Anne. "She's not just a vehicle, She's a noble beautiful creature."

"And now that you both read this," said Hop pop. "All you two need now, is experience." Darrel and Anne shot their eyes wide open when he said that. They had no idea what they went through, and they agreed not to tell him. Anne laughed insanely away while Darrel just walked out. But not before turning his head and telling Hop pop, "Watch your back."

Hop pop stares at the entrance to his closed bedroom door, taking Darrel's warning to heart. "I don't feel safe," was all he said. The rest of the morning drew quiet.

Topical Treatment

Chapter 8 - Topical Treatment

Another couple days goes by in the Plantar house. Darrel, Tint, and Cronaxx do their fair share at being farm handlers. While at the same time, Cronaxx trains both Tint and Darrel how to channel their magic powers.

Cronaxx once told them that magic grows restless, if remained dormant for long periods of time. But Darrel continued to learn how to handle his newfound abilities. Up to the point that he can perform basic illusions, the elements of earth, wind, and water, and create light and vision orbs in the palm of his hands. Darrel grew happy knowing he can willingly control those spells, but never knew when they could come in handy.

All that changed one day, when the Plantars, Darrel and the Salamanders were playing go fish. "Darrel, got any 3's? Hop pop asked. Darrel drew one card to Hop pop. "I'm surprised you guys play this game," he said. "Because we play Go Fish back home, too."

Then, the group hears Anne coming up from the basement. As she got out she screamed, leaving everyone scared. Her face was covered in red pimples. "Is someone dead?" Hop pop exclaimed. "WHY ARE WE YELLING?!" screamed Polly.

"Just look!" Anne said, pointing to her face. Darrel gave off a disgusted look, but gestured as if he knew something like this would happen. But the amphibians were scared, "Oh my!" "What are those things?" "She's diseased!" "We have to quarantine her!" "Don't struggle, Anne."

"Whoa, whoa whoa, guys," said Darrel. "She's not diseased. Those things on her face are called pimples. It's a human condition that

happens in their teenage years."

The amphibians sigh with relief and enter the kitchen. Anne, however, feels worse than before. "Everybody already treats me like a monster," she said as she puts a spoon close to her face. "This is just going to make it ten times worse. Egh."

Darrel hated seeing Anne looking down. "Hey you're not the only one being called a monster in Wartwood, Anne," he said. "I mean, just yesterday..."

(Flashback - just yesterday)

Darrel walks down the street, whistling and twirling his staff. As he walks down, the citizens of Wartwood look in horror and disgust. "Ahh! It's hideous" "Look away Teddy!" "Great, now we have two hideous monsters." "AHH!" Darrel feels hurt from the inside, but then shrugs it off.

(Flashback ends)

"How are you not hurt by them calling you a monster?" Anne asked. "Because I don't know those people. Sure, it hurts, but they don't know me either."

"He's right, Anne," said Sprig. "Who cares what they think? We like you." Sprig gives Anne puppy eyes to try to make her feel better. However, Anne wasn't having any of it.

"Uh huh, I'm just gonna hide in the basement until this clears up." But, Hop pop and his farm had other plans. "Sorry Anne, but nobody's hiding anywhere today."

Hop pop picks up a bucket of what looks like peapods. "I need help with the vegetable stand. We gotta bump a crop of scream beans that need selling." He pinches a scream bean and it lets out a high pitched scream.

Anne slams her face on the table in defeat, groaning in shame. Darrel watched with pity, until he came up with an idea. "Anne, I may have a way to get rid of them," he said.

Anne suddenly shoots her head back up. "You do? What is it?" she asked. "I can cast an illusion spell that can make your pimples disappear. However, it's only temporary and I don't know how long it'll last."

Anne gets out of her seat and gets into his face in desperation. "I'll take anything to get rid of these things."

Darrel enters the living room, and Anne follows him. Darrel sways his arms and creates light sparkling auras in his hands. "Now in order for this to work, my spell has to come in contact with your pimples," said Darrel.

Anne realized what he had to do, "It's okay, Darrel," she said. "Do what you have to do." Darrel nodded and put his hands on her face. The two looked in each other's eyes, giving off a small blush. "Umm, feel anything?" Darrel asked. "Just soft vibrations," replied Anne. The two give off a slight chuckle. "I think it's working."

After a few more seconds, Anne's pimples vanished. "That should do it," said Darrel. Anne takes her spoon and smiles at what he did. She hugs him with glee. "Thank you so much Darrel,"

Darrel returns her hug, "You're welcome Anne. But just remember, this spell is only temporary, and I don't know when it will wear off." "Well now, now that you've helped her, we've got beans to sell," said Hop pop.

At the marketplace, the frogs in Wartwood gathered to sell their products. The Plantars prepare their stand to sell their scream beans. "Alright everyone," said Hop pop. "Get out there and sell like your lives depend on it. Because they do, we really need this." Hop pop wasn't kidding when he realized his stand was empty, and not a single customer in sight.

The kids went out in the marketplace to give samples to potential customers. Anne tried to sell them, but the frogs tried to stray away from her. Darrel felt guilty seeing her down, even when the frogs are straying away from him too.

As he turned to see Anne again, he became surprised. His illusion spell was wearing off. "Anne!" he cried. "What's up Darrel?" "Your face." Suddenly, her pimpled face was exposed to the public.

The frogs gazed at her, making her feel embarrassed. "No! No, don't look at me!" "Are you seeing what I'm seeing?" "I think so." "They're warts! Beautiful Ruby Red Warts!" This statement left Darrel and Anne confused. "Wait, what?"

Suddenly, Anne was lifted by the crowd feeling better about her appearance. Darrel was happy to see her smiling, despite her condition. But somewhere in his gut, told him otherwise. He wasn't sure why, but he knows what it'll tell him in due time.

Later, after the town's admiration of Anne's pimples, they gave her gifts and it filled up the Plantar house. "Wow, Anne. This is amazing!" Darrel exclaimed. "Yeah, look at all of these gifts," said Tint. "Yeah, the townspeople like me," said Anne. "They really like me."

"Do they?" Cronaxx asked. "Or do they love you because of those pimples you have on your face?" "They like me, Cronaxx," Anne replied. "Oh, I better take care of these money makers if I'm ever going to keep this up." She takes a stick of butter and rubs it on her face. "Babies, babies are hungry."

Darrel, Cronaxx, Tint, and the Plantars groan in disgust watching her do that. Suddenly, they hear a horn honking outside. They look to see the Mayor of Wartwood, Mayor Toadstool, appear in front of a royal snail.

"Anne, my dear. Care to join me for a joyride?" Toadstool asked. "We brought the fancy snail," said his assistant, Toadie. "Get Out!" Anne

cried in excitement. "Woah," gasped Darrel. "That feels too fancy for my taste." "Are you kidding me?" Sprig asked. "This is amazing!"

"Finally the luxury I deserve," said Hop pop as he walks up to the snail. But Toadstool stops him. "I'm afraid only Anne is invited. Just look at those beautiful warts."

Anne climbed up onto the snail, and Mayor Toadstool followed. "Don't look so glum guys," she said. "It's just a ride. I'll be back in a few." Then, the mayor's snail zoomed off.

The rest of the group looked in disappointment, until Hop pop broke the silence. "It begins..." "What begins?" Tint asked. "Fame," replied Hop pop. "Fame changes people, kids. And not in a good way."

Darrel knew that Hop pop was right about that. He looks out to Anne with his concerned expression on his face. 'Don't let those pimples get in your head, Anne. I don't want you to be someone you're not,' he thought.

While Anne was showing off to the citizens of Wartwood, the Plantars, Darrel, and the Salamanders were working hard at the farm. There were times when Anne drove across the farm, and the citizens followed her, destroying the crops. Other times the crowd would destroy their vegetable stand making all the scream beans scream.

There were also times that Darrel would stand in the crowd watching Anne participate in charity benefits for Mayor Toadstool. From opening schools, to unveiling statues. Darrel watches her with a glum look on his face. 'Who knows how long those things are going to be on her face?' he thought.

Then one day, the group sneak into City Hollow to find Anne in her living quarters. Sprig knocks on the window, and the group pours in. "Hey Anne, got time for a visit?" asked Sprig.

"Oh, hey guys," said Anne. "Gotta say Anne, I'm liking the new pad," said Darrel. "I know, epic right?" Anne immediately jumps on her couch, posing like the portrait above her. "Can you believe I was living in your basement? Hah, it was cold, dusty, not to mention smelly. Oh, no offense."

Hop pop tries to hide his anger and simply says, "None taken." Then, the grandfather clock chimes. "Oh shoot, we gotta wrap this up," said Anne. "I've got to sign autographs, kiss tadpoles, and do some interviews all before dinner."

She pushes the group out of her quarters, "So good to talk to you guys. Love you, mean it. Mwah." She closes the door leaving most of the group frazzled by her attitude. Sprig was upset, Polly was shocked, Darrel was glum, and Tint didn't know what to think.

"The heck was that?" Sprig asked. "It's like she's a different person," said Tint. "Yeah, a crazy person," said Polly. Darrel simply kicked the ground with his shoe. "It's those stupid pimples," he mumbled quietly.

However, Hop pop and Cronaxx stood tall. "But she's your best friend right?" Cronaxx asked Darrel. Darrel nodded quietly. "Kids, whenever one of your own makes it big, you support them no matter what. Because deep deep deep down, they're the same person," said Hop pop. Everyone, even Darrel agreed. But what they didn't know was that Anne was listening from the other side.

Back at the farm, Darrel was practicing magic, using the element of water. Tint came by to practice using his fire magic. "You know that when water and fire come together, it evaporates into a cloud?" Tint asked. Darrel was surprised, "No, I didn't."

Tint smiled, "Let's give it a try. Just follow my lead." The two wizards in training perform their elemental powers in sync, mirroring their every move. Then, when Darrel and Tint hit their water ball and flameball together, it evaporated into mist.

"Cool," said Darrel. "Now watch this," said Tint. He creates more mist from his hands, and the cloud condensates into rain. "The more mist that condenses into that cloud," said Tint. "The bigger chances of rain coming from the sky," Darrel finished.

"Exactly," said Cronaxx. "The fire, the water, the soil, they have no pride. Even when they look physically different, they are still what they are on the inside." "Don't worry, Darrel. She'll come around," said Tint. Darrel nodded, "Okay, let's get some sleep." The three went into Bessie's stable and got some shut eye.

The very next morning, the Plantars and the Salamanders had breakfast. Darrel rushed in with a letter in his hand. "Guys! Anne is in trouble! We need to go!" he cried. "Alright!" cried Sprig. The group raced into town, and into City Hollow.

Sprig knocks on the door, and Anne quickly lets them in. "We came as soon as we got your note," said Tint. "What's the trouble?" Polly asked. Anne shows them that her pimples are gone. "My life is ruined! My zits are gone. Without them, I'm nothing!"

Sprig was a bit uneasy with her situation, but Darrel quickly went to Anne's side. He puts his hands on Anne's shoulders, "Anne, calm down. We're here for you, and we'll do anything we can to help you." He looks at Cronaxx and Hop pop who nod at his support.

"Oh thank goodness!" Anne cried. Sprig got to thinking and then pulled out a book. "What if we stuck some of those swamp berries to your face?" He points to a batch of berries to the group. "They kinda look like pimples," said Tint. "And I can cast a color charm to make them look like authentic pimples, like the ones you had before," said Darrel.

"That's a great idea," said Anne. "But how are we going to get into the swamp without me being seen? I have fa-Annes everywhere." "I'm not even going to ask. Otherwise it'll catch on all of us," said Cronaxx. "Don't worry about the crowds Anne, I have a pla-Anne," said Hop pop. "And now it's hooked onto us," said Tint.

Outside the gates, the citizens of Wartwood crowded the gates, hoping to see Anne and her pimples. The group came out with a laundromat filled with towels. "Make way, everyone!" Tint cried. "Plague towels, everyone," said Hop pop. "Plague towels !"

The crowds made way to avoid getting infected. Leaving the group a path to get by. But as they hit a pebble, Anne's shoe pops out of one of the towels. "Hey everyone, that's Anne's foot!" cried one of the frogs. "The jig is up! RUN!" Sprig cried.

The group raced out of the Hollow and into the city streets. The crowd followed not far behind them. "We'll never make it!" Anne cried. "Not without a diversion, we won't," said Cronaxx. "Anne give me and Hop pop your shoe,"

"Alright," said Anne. She gives Hop pop and Cronaxx her shoe and they stop in their tracks. "Hey everyone! We got Anne's shoe!" Surprised at their sudden stop, Anne and Darrel cried out. "Hop pop! NOOOO!" "CRONAAAAAXXXX!"

The crowd converged on Hop pop and Cronaxx's position. They turned their heads and said, "Fly, you fools." The crowd dog piled on them and the kids disappeared into the swamp. "They'll be fine," said Polly. "I'll second that," said Tint.

The group makes it to the swamp and finds the swamp berries. Anne takes the berries and sticks them onto her face. "How do I look?" she asked. "Like a pepperoni pizza," replied Darrel. "So I say you look right for the public." Anne looks to the water and smiles, "Thanks for helping me guys." Darrel waves his hand and makes the berries look more red. "That's what we're here for," said Sprig. "Not me," said Polly. "I'm just here for the drama."

Later that day, the group takes Anne to the meeting without being seen. They blend into the crowd and see Anne come out to give her speech. Darrel smiled at her with support, but this smile was different. This smile was real and sincere.

"Crazy week, huh?" Anne started. "A couple of days ago, I was a monster. But now, I'm the pride and joy of Wartwood. I've got a nice apartment, fa-Annes, fame..." She looks to Darrel with a genuine smile on her face. "But, you know what I'm missing? The people who will stick with me, whether I'm a monster or not."

She takes the berries off her face and drops them on the ground. The crowd looks in shock and awe. Darrel places his hand on his heart, feeling prideful for his friend's decision. Mayor Toadstool, however, wasn't happy. "Anne! What are you doing? You're throwing it all away? Now how am I supposed to convince these idiots to vote for me?!"

Mayor Toadstool was unaware that the mic was on, and that the crowd was listening. The crowd grew furious that they prepared their fruits and vegetables to throw at him. "Now simmer down now. Simmer do-" The frogs throw their fruit at him and he runs off from the frogs of Wartwood.

After that, the crowd dispersed leaving the group alone. Anne, feeling guilty with how she acted grew anxious. "Uh, hey guys." The group just smiled, and Sprig pulled up an Anne doll. "These are horrifying," he said. The Salamanders nodded in agreement.

"Thanks for sticking with me, even when the attention got to my head," said Anne. "Just remember to do the same thing when I'm rich and famous," said Hop pop. "Might not ever happen," said Tint.

"Any chance I can go back to being the monster that lives in your basement?" Anne asked. Sprig and Polly hug Anne's legs and Darrel places his hand on Anne's shoulder. "We wouldn't have it any other way," he said. "Thanks you guys," said Anne.

Suddenly, Anne just remembered something. "Hey, you know what? I still have the key to the apartment. You guys wanna try out the hot tub before they change the locks?" The group cheered, accepting the offer, and went off to the apartment.

The very next day, the group prepares for another day in the fields. As Darrel got ready for his assignments, Tint noticed something. "Hey Darrel, you got something on your face," he said. "I do?" Darrel asked. He takes out his phone and uses the glass reflection to see his face.

He finds a pimple on his right cheek, and laughs it off. "It appears the universe has put me in Anne's shoes," he said. "What was that, Darrel?" Anne asked. "I just got a pimple on my cheek," replied Darrel. "It's no big deal, it's just the last of its kind." The two laugh it off as they prepare to work in the fields again.

Of course we all must learn not to let fame go over our head. Because it doesn't last very long, but it is important that we use fame to let people know who we are. Who we truly are. The next chapter is going to be completely original, and I guarantee you might like it.

Insect-umongous

Chapter 9 - Insect-umongous

After the events of Anne and her pimples, Darrel decided to take some time away from all the craziness. He continues to practice his magic spells on rocks, trees, flowers, and mushrooms. Resulting in giving Darrel a green thumb on plant life.

Darrel smiles on the progress he made the past week, he may as well be ready for more intermediate spells. But, of course, Cronaxx tells him that mastering magic spells takes years to train. Darrel didn't mind the waiting, as long as he didn't hurt anyone.

One day, Darrel was hoeing Hop pop's garden when Cronaxx walked up to him. "Darrel, I need you to do me a favor," he said. "Of course, Cronaxx," said Darrel. "What do you need?" "I need you to go into the wilderness and collect a few milkweeds for a potion I'm working on."

Darrel nodded, "Right away Cronaxx, I'll get some hiking equipment and I'll be on my way." Darrel enters the stables and packs up a few things in his backpack. Before he could do anything else, Hop pop entered the stables.

"Going somewhere?" he asked. "Just about to collect something for Cronaxx," replied Darrel. "And are you going to do that with the fields half complete?" Hop pop asked. Darrel looked back outside to see half the fields have been hoed. "Oh, I'm so sorry Hop pop," said Darrel. "Just make sure you finish your job before you move on to Cronaxx's," said Hop pop

And Darrel did just that, he put his stuff on hold and went back to working in the garden. To no surprise to anyone, Darrel did a great job. Thanks to his hard work, more vegetables will have proper soil to grow in.

Darrel returns to the stables and takes a water break. After finishing his water he looks at his backpack and remembers what Cronaxx asked him to do. He takes his backpack, the Eternal Staff, and makes his way into the wilderness.

Darrel waves off to the group, "I'll be back shortly!" he called. "Just be back before nighttime," said Hop pop. Darrel takes his leave in the forests. But before he could, "Darrel! Wait!" Anne cried.

"What's up, Anne?" Darrel asked. "I just wanna give you something in case you get lost," Anne replied. She reaches in her pocket and takes out what looks like a compass. "You forgot this when we played that game Marcy hosted."

Darrel was so happy, "I thought I lost it. My father's compass." He reflects on his memories of his father as he gazes on the compass. Darrel's facial expression changes to a gloomy mood. "I miss my family so much," he said.

Anne saw his expression and gave him another warm hug. "I know," she said. "I miss my family too. But I know we'll see them again." Darrel and Anne break off from the hug. "No matter what, we're going to find our friends and get back home," he said.

Darrel waves off to Anne and ventures off into the wilderness. His journey takes him into the dark marshes of the swamps. It was there that fresh milkweed grew near the trees. Darrel smiled, seeing that he didn't have to go too far from the farm.

As he collected milkweed, he heard a groaning noise behind the treeline. Darrel picked what was left and left it in his bag. He walks to the source of the noise with his staff. He looks behind the treeline to see a large dragonfly laying a few eggs. Only for it to die suddenly afterwards.

Darrel looked disgusted seeing the laid eggs, but looked sad seeing the dragonfly perish. 'Guess she's fulfilled her cycle in life,' he thought. He looks back to the eggs and sees them about to hatch.

Suddenly, a large frill neck lizard popped out of the mud and ate a mouthful of the eggs. Darrel swung his staff to scare off the lizard, but it opened its frilled neck as a sign of dominance. However, Darrel waved his hand, calling upon mother nature. Vines from trees gripped, whipped, and stung the giant lizard. Then, a giant venus flytrap roared, scaring off the lizard.

Darrel smiled winning against the lizard. But frowned knowing that all the eggs were eaten. As Darrel prepares to leave with the milkweed, he spots a surviving egg under a tree root. He rushes over to bring it back to its nest, and finds a crack on the egg. The dragonfly wasn't ready to hatch, and the crack was only going to make things difficult for it.

Darrel wanted the dragonfly to live a full life, so he used his magic to fix the crack on the egg. The magic spell was a success, but Darrel thought he shouldn't leave it on its own. 'If that lizard took down its brothers and sisters, who knows what else lies in these swamps,' he thought.

"I'll take you back to the farm until you're ready to hatch," said Darrel. He takes his staff and journeys out of the swamps. As he hikes into the forests, he suddenly feels shaking in his hand. The egg was somehow ready to hatch.

Darrel places the egg down and backs up. The egg reveals a large larva, and immediately molts into an adult. Darrel was shocked at how fast the dragonfly grew. It stood as tall as three humans and its wingspan distanced up to two human houses. The dragonfly had a shade of blue exoskin with yellow eyes.

The dragonfly stared down Darrel as he fell back, scared of what might come next. Instead, the dragonfly brushed up against him and clapped its mouth parts in his backpack and took the milkweed he collected.

"Hey," said Darrel. "That wasn't for you. That was for my friend." The dragonfly leaned back from Darrel, chewing on the milkweed. "But, I

guess you were hungry. I can always get more."

As Darrel prepared to go back, the dragonfly jumped into the trees, disappearing from sight. Darrel returned to the swamps and gathered more milkweed. As he left the swamps again, he left a bit of milkweed behind in case the dragonfly came back.

Back at the farm, Cronaxx was waiting outside the gates for Darrel to return. He smiles seeing his human friend return. "I was getting worried something happened to you," he said. "I got sidetracked," said Darrel. "The first batch of milkweed I gathered was eaten by a large dragonfly, so I had to collect what was left."

Cronaxx chuckled, "You have no idea that milkweed is dragonflies favorite food." Darrel hands over the milkweed to Cronaxx. "Anyway, here's the milkweed you asked for," he said. "Thank you, Darrel. Your efforts will be rewarded."

The next day, Darrel helped Hop pop clean out his study. He comes across a book containing diagrams about dragonflies. They also include information about their diets, their life cycle, and behavior.

"So, you're into dragonflies?" Hop pop asked. Darrel quietly nodded. "Well I'd be careful if I were you. Some dragonflies pick up frogs out of nowhere and they never come back." Darrel grinned, "Please, an apprentice wizard like myself? Dragonflies won't have the chance to grab me."

After helping Hop pop, the day grew slow. Darrel took the opportunity to see if his flying friend is still around. He returned to the forests with milkweed in his hands. He kept a silent watch as he walked around.

Then, he hears clipping coming from behind. The dragonfly climbed over a rock and onto the ground. Darrel reached out and gave him more milkweed. "Guess you clip your jaws whenever your-" Suddenly, the dragonfly snatched the weed out of his hands and ate it. "Hungry."

The dragonfly crawls up to Darrel making him back up until he is pinned behind a rock. "I don't have any more," said Darrel. But the dragonfly regurgitated the milkweed on Darrel's lap. "Eugh!"

Darrel was left confused as the dragonfly stared at him. He gestures at Darrel to eat the chewed up milkweed. Disgusted, he hesitantly does so. He hated the part of swallowing the milkweed, but made the dragonfly purr with happiness.

Darrel smiles at him with sincerity and watches him open his wings. Darrel was amazed by its grace and beauty. "It's like I'm looking at Mothra," he said. The dragonfly flaps his wings, pushing Darrel back, and hovers for a short period of time.

The dragonfly lands and Darrel takes a stick and starts drawing him. The dragonfly wanted to try something like that, and took a branch from a tree. He drags it across the ground in circles and curves, then drops it finishing his masterpiece.

Darrel looks around to get a better look, trying not to damage what the dragonfly made. He walks over the lines, looking at the drawing, until he comes face to face with the dragonfly.

The dragonfly clips his jaws in happiness, while Darrel smiles at him. He reaches out to touch him, but the dragonfly leans back. Darrel shuts his eyes and looks away. "It's okay," he said. "I'm not going to hurt you." He reaches out his hand to the insect, giving him his trust. In return, the dragonfly shut its eyes and leaned forward into Darrel's hand.

Darrel looks to his newfound friend as well as the dragonfly. He clips his jaws again and rubs his eye on Darrel's cheek. "You must really like to clip your mouth," he said. Then he gasped, "That's it. I'll call you Clipper." He scratches under his chin, making him purr.

Darrel looked to the sky and realized it was getting late. "Sorry Clipper, I've got to get back home." As Darrel started to walk away, Clipper began to follow him. Darrel was a bit hesitant, he knew that

pets are forbidden. "Hop pop said we can't have pets, Clipper. I'm sorry."

Suddenly, he came up with an idea, "But, if you could be useful to the farm. Maybe Hop pop will have reason to keep you. We just need to find out what you can do. Give me until tomorrow okay?"

Clipper knelt down, preparing to sleep for the night. Darrel smiles and heads back to the farm. He sneaks back into the stables and prepares to sleep for the night. He looks back to the forest and prepares to come up with his plan. 'Don't worry Clipper I'll think of something to make you a part of the group.'

The very next day, Darrel brought more milkweed to feed Clipper. The two ponder over what they can do to help around the farm. After spending another hour coming up with nothing, Clipper jumps a bit getting Darrel's attention. "What is it bud?"

Clipper gestured Darrel to get on his back. He lowered his wings to give him room to climb on. Darrel climbs up, and sits down on his prothorax. Before Darrel could do anything else, Clipper launched up into the air.

Darrel was shocked, having to fly on a dragonfly caught him off guard. He gripped onto Clipper's head and prepared to zip across the wilderness. Darrel enjoyed the breeze, until Clipper came to a stop and he flew off of Clipper.

Darrel luckily lands into the water. "Wow! That was amazing Clipper," said Darrel. "Maybe we could use your speed and flight to deliver food in record time." Clipper clicked his jaws as an approved response.

Later, Darrel found the best candidate for his plan, One Eyed Wally. "Hey, Wally," Darrel greeted. "Oh hey, monster," said Wally. "How would you like to have fresh vegetables delivered to you in record time?"

After talking with Wally, Darrel and Clipper took to the skies with a sack of wild carrots. Clipper flew high, but being a dragonfly could only take him so far. He could go as high as the mountains that block the valley.

"Okay Clipper, let's take this nice and slow," said Darrel. He guides Clipper down to the swamps of Wartwood and flips upside down. He finds Wally and drops the sack in his hands. "Thanks for the speedy delivery!" He cried.

With the delivery a success, Darrel decides to take Clipper for a speed run. Darrel guides Clipper to the skies until he can't climb farther. Then, Darrel lets go of Clipper and the two fall down to the ground. Darrel remained close to Clipper and climbed back on to pull him up from the ground.

The two zipped through trees, through fields, even passed the Plantar farm. Darrel raised his arms with joy and excitement. He felt like the real him who was kept hidden in shyness, suddenly burst out revealing his true self.

After a bit more flying, Darrel and Clipper set down near the watering hole to get something fresh to drink. "I think you're going to be a great addition to our family," said Darrel. "Let's just hope Hop pop can include you into the family."

The very next day, Darrel woke up and was ready for another day of farming. But he knew that today, he had to tell the group of his new friend. So Darrel tended Bessie with the Salamanders. Then tended to the gardens with Anne, Sprig, and Polly. And finally, cleaned up the kitchen with Hop pop.

As the sun was near the horizon, Darrel took a deep breath. "Guys! Can I have your attention?" The group came out and gathered together. "What's up, Darrel?" Anne asked. "There's something I need to show you guys," Darrel replied. "Is this why you've been going off into the wilderness on your own?" Sprig asked. Darrel just nodded his head.

The group makes their way into the open wilderness near the watering hole. "Okay, it should be here," said Darrel. "So, what's the thing you wanted to show us?" Polly asked. Darrel looked to Polly and replied, "A new friend."

He whistles loudly and Clipper comes out of hiding from the trees. The Plantars were shocked, Anne was left in awe, and the Salamanders looked with amazement. "What kind of dragonfly is that?!" Sprig asked "One of many few," said Hop pop. "This dragonfly can tower even the tallest of Amphibians, and run as fast as the dominant predators in the valleys."

"How did you find him?" Tint asked. "I spotted his egg after a large lizard ate off most of his brethren," replied Darrel. "I healed his crack and he suddenly hatched and molted faster than I anticipated."

Clipper rubs his head on Darrel, showing his affection to the group. "He must really like you," said Cronaxx. "I hope you're not planning on keeping him as a pet," said Hop pop. "Not a pet," said Darrel. "An asset for the Plantar Farms. He can provide fast deliveries."

"Can he really fly at fast speeds?" Anne asked. "He sure can," replied Darrel. "And I'll prove it." He climbs on Clipper's back and prepares his preflight stance. "Would anyone like to go for a ride?"

Hop pop was hesitant, and Cronaxx was firm. "I'm not as young as I used to be," he said. Tint, Sprig, and Polly awed. But Anne, without any second thoughts, slowly approached the dragonfly and climbed on.

Suddenly, Clipper jumped off and flapped his wings. Clipper begins flying across the valley, at a smooth pace. Anne, who closed her eyes during launch, opened her eyes again. She saw the beauty of the village of Wartwood and the clouds in many shapes and sizes. Anne raises her arms up and she felt like she was flying herself.

Darrel looked over to Anne, seeing how much fun she's having. Her expression made him smile, 'It looks to me like you're having a fun

time Anne.' As night grew darker, the red moon was glowing so bright. Darrel was so busy looking at the moon, that he didn't notice that Anne's hand was touching his side.

After a few more minutes, Clipper landed back at the watering hole. And Darrel and Anne saw One-eyed Wally talking with the amphibians. "Darrel, having Clipper around is a great idea!" Hop pop cheered. "Huh?" Darrel asked. "Wally told me about your delivery, and he was more than pleased. He paid us in advance to expand your instant delivery business." He shows the two humans the sack of coppers.

Darrel looked with excitement, "So that means..?" Hop pop nodded, "Clipper can join our farm. As long as you take care of him." Anne and Darrel cheered. "I can assure you, Hop pop that Clipper is our Bessie," said Darrel. "Come on Clipper, let's go home." Clipper clapped his jaws in happiness and followed the group back to the farm.

Later that night, Darrel and the salamanders were prepared to settle in for the night. "Are you sure Clipper has everything he needs?" Tint asked Darrel. Darrel looks out to Clipper who's burying himself in the huge pile of hay outside. "I think he'll be warm enough for the night," replied Darrel. "Good night Clipper." he called. Clipper clapped his jaws goodnight and snuzzled in the hay. Darrel, the Salamanders, and Bessie get comfy for another good night's sleep.

Looks like Darrel got himself a new flying companion for his journey in Amphibia. It took a lot of research on dragonflies, but I hope I got a decent amount of facts for this case. Just to keep in mind, this journey will follow closely to the original series. So I'll be adding a couple of twists along the way. Fun fact: I was going to call this chapter, How to Train Your Dragonfly, but I wanted to try something fun with my title chapters. The hint is in the Owl House episodes.

Not My Boss

Chapter 10 - Not my Boss

It was another sunny day in the world of Amphibia. And it was a wonderful day to work on the crops in the Plantar Farm. However, some of the farmers weren't all bright and cheery. But that didn't stop the rest of the farmers from expressing a positive attitude.

Darrel was busy keeping Bessie and Clipper fed. But Clipper ate more food because of his size. "Is there no end to your stomach, buddy?" Darrel asked. Tint was working on sharpening the farm tools and cleaning them for pristine condition. "Everything clean, greased, and sharpened. So that your actions are beautiful," he said.

Cronaxx was mostly working on the numbers. Counting all the plants harvested, weeded, planted, and summing up the amount of food sold every day. Cronaxx mumbles to himself, keeping track of the numbers. "Carry the four, divide the radius of the eggplant which ranges to and from..."

As for Anne, Sprig, and Polly, they were weeding the crops. Sprig looks to their cowapillars and comes up with an idea. He rushes to Hop pop, who is seen drinking lemonade and lounging on his lawn chair.

"Hop pop! Hop pop! Great idea. What if we trained the cowapillars to eat the weeds? That way we-" Hop pop stops him talking and points to a barrel with a sign that says suggestions on it. "Suggestion Barrel's over there."

He rushes to the barrel and begins writing his suggestion. Darrel, Tint, Anne, and Polly approach the barrel as well. "I didn't know you guys have a suggestion barrel," said Darrel. "Do you think he actually reads your suggestions?" Tint asks. "Doubt it," Polly replied.

"I suggested a swimming pool months ago, and that never happened."

"Oh come on guys," said Sprig. "Have a little faith in Hop pop." Then, a scent caught whiff from Tint's nose. "I smell something," he said. "Something unusual at a farm, but familiar to me." Darrel expresses a curious look, "What do you smell?" "Ember," Tint replied. "Coming from that barrel."

Tint points to the suggestion barrel, and Darrel moves it to find out. The kids discover that at the bottom of the barrel was a pit of fire. They were shocked to see that Hop pop doesn't even bother to look at suggestions. "A Fire Pit?!" Polly cried. "That's the opposite of a swimming pool."

Sprig cried out, "Why Hop pop? WHY!?" Hop pop bounced out of his chair and said, "Because your suggestions were ridiculous. You can't just dig swimming pools anywhere, it attracts pests. Running a farm ain't easy kids."

Darrel looked at Hop pop with disappointment and said, "You're right Hop pop. Running a farm isn't easy, but that doesn't mean you should ignore your workers. I grew up in a country where everyone has a voice. And their voices matter. Ignoring those voices ended up causing disaster."

Cronaxx stops counting in his tracks and looks to the group. "A good leader inspires people to have confidence in their leader. A great leader inspires people to have confidence in themselves," he said.

"Cronaxx is right," said Sprig. "If I were in charge, I'd listen to other people's suggestions. Not burn them!" "You? Run the farm?" Hop pop teased. "Ha! Run it into the ground maybe." The two croak at each other surprising Polly. "Is that an official challenge?"

Sprig runs up to a bell posted high to the sky. He hits the bell while giving off a battle cry. "Sprig Plantar, you have rung the family challenge bell," announced Polly. "What is your challenge?"

"I want to replace Hop pop and run the farm my way." Sprig replied. "I do formally accept this challenge," said Hop pop. Anne whispers to Darrel, "Do you think this'll make sense in a moment?" Darrel shrugged, "Maybe."

Shortly after, Polly, the salamanders, and the humans sit on a log while Sprig and Hop pop cover themselves in mud. "You know what, forget I asked that," said Anne. Darrel nodded, "So, care to explain what's going on?"

Hop pop rubs mud on his face and replies, "That Plantar family challenge." "An artful test of skill where the winner takes all!" Sprig cried. "They push each other until someone falls off a lily pad," explained Polly. "It's dumb, but fun to watch."

Darrel perked up to the challenge making him remember something. "Almost kinda like sumo wrestling," he said. "Sumo what now?" Tint asked. "It's basically a form of competitive wrestling where two big Japanese wrestlers attempt to force their opponents out of a circular ring."

"How do you know this stuff?" Cronaxx asked. Darrel takes out his phone and shows a video of his two sisters acting like sumo wrestlers whenever they fight each other. Darrel then shows a video he created using Japanese announcers and words appearing on screen.

Anne laughs at his video. "That was hilarious, Darrel. Why didn't you publish that?" Anne asked. "Because my family asked me not to and I agreed. There are some videos I keep to myself," replied Darrel.

"Enough chit chat," said Polly. "Let the challenge begin!" She hits her small tail on the bell announcing the start of the challenge. Hop pop and Sprig charge at each other pushing and shoving, giving each other a few smacks.

Hop pop pushes Sprig across the lily pad and close to the edge. On the verge of victory, Hop pop pins Sprig down. "Give it up boy," he

said. "I've got the experience and the upper body strength."

"Oh yeah," grunted Sprig. "Well I've got the MORAL HIGH GROUND!" Sprig counteracts Hop pop's grip by moving his arms to the side. Then uses his legs to lift Hop pop off the lily pad and into the mud pit. Thus winning the challenge.

The group was stunned at first, but then congratulated their new leader. "Sprig's head of the farm!" they chanted. Hop pop however, was upset. "Looks like my time is over," he said as he walks off into the wilderness. Cronaxx looks back to where Hop pop left, feeling sorry for his friend.

Back at the Plantar farm, the group opens their attention to Sprig. "As long as I'm in charge, no suggestions are bad," he announced. "Swimming Pools?" Polly asked. "You betcha," replied Sprig. "Dance parties?" Anne asked. "Let's have one right now baby!" Anne turns on her music and the three dance the night away.

Anne looks over to see Darrel leaving the house. "Hey, why don't you guys join us?" she asked. "Just a moment Anne," Darrel replied. "I need to feed Clipper and Bessie before I do. But keep that music pumping until then."

Darrel exits the house only for Cronaxx to wait for him. "I hope this doesn't affect your training, or your chores," he said. Darrel shook his head, "It won't Cronaxx. I'm still going to do my part on this farm, and continue training as follows." Cronaxx nodded in relief, "That's good, because tomorrow, we've got much needed exercise to perform."

For the rest of the day, Darrel continued his magic training. All while Sprig takes action and approves the team's suggestions. Polly got her swimming pool, they taught the cowapillars to eat the weeds, even paid a clown for entertainment. Except for Polly, who hates clowns.

After a while, the crew was able to see the complete renovation of the Plantar farmhouse. "I got to say, this looks promising," said Tint. "Take it all in buddy," said Sprig. "This is what good leadership looks like."

Anne looks around, "Uhh anybody worried about Hop pop? I haven't seen him since we got back." Darrel looks around too. "Hey yeah," he said. "I'm a little concerned as well, since he looked upset." "He's probably off licking his wounds," Sprig shrugged. That gave Darrel a more worried look.

Then, things started to turn sour so quickly. When Darrel got ready to feed Clipper and Bessie, he realized that they ran out of hay for the animals. Darrel goes over to the house to find Sprig sliding down the slide. "Hey Sprig, the animals are getting feisty and we're out of hay. We need to get more to keep them from going hungry."

Sprig pops out of the water and says, "Great suggestion." That's when Anne's stomach growled. "Speaking of food, we should eat too," she said. The group heads inside and finds that there's no food left. "Guess today's the day Hop pop goes to the grocery store," said Tint.

"What are we going to do?" Anne asked. "I am getting HANGRY!" Darrel backs up in fear, knowing how agitated Anne gets when she's hungry. Suddenly, Sprig comes up with an idea and picks out potatoes from the garden. "Fresh from mother nature itself," he said.

Suddenly a small centipede hisses at the group scaring them. Darrel takes the staff and casts a freeze spell. Putting the insect in a solid ice cube. "Whoops, didn't check for pests," said Sprig. "Well how were we supposed to know that?!" Darrel asked. "I'm beginning to think there are a few things we don't know about running a farm," said Anne.

"We've got some kinks to work out, sure," said Sprig. "But isn't it better to live in a place where you're listened to?" Suddenly, Clipper starts buzzing his wings and bites down on the corral surrounding

him. Darrel and the salamanders rush out to see the damage he's causing. To avoid more mishaps, Tint casts a sleep spell to keep Clipper in check.

Later that night, Darrel packs a few necessities and sneaks out of the barn. But the salamanders stop him. "Going somewhere Darrel?" Cronaxx asked. "Yes, I'm finding Hop pop and we're putting him back in charge. Without any suggestions to say no to, Sprig will just destroy the farm."

Cronaxx and Tint smiled, "Good, because we're coming with you," said Tint. "Maybe, we can teach him a lesson in listening to others," said Cronaxx. "Any idea where he might be?" Darrel waves his hands and casts another vision orb. "Show me Hopediah Plantar," said Darrel. The orb shows Hop pop in a cemetery living amongst the beetles.

Darrel and the salamanders arrive at the cemetery and find Hop pop. "Howdy do, salamanders," he greeted them. "How are you doing?" "Not so good Hop pop," Tint replied. "Oh before you guys say anything else, could you help me pick mushrooms for Jeremey and his community?" Hop pop asked.

Cronaxx nodded, "Of course Hop pop, I like to see how life is treating you." Darrel and Tint groaned with impatience, but agreed to help out. Soon, the group was picking mushrooms for the beetles.

Darrel approached Hop pop and asked him, "How does it feel to be a part of a community where your voice matters?" "Surprisingly, it's really swell Darrel," replied Hop pop. "I feel like I'm a part of something."

Just then, Anne and Polly arrive. "There they are!" Polly cried. "Hop pop." "Dude, we've been looking all over for you," said Anne. "Hello girls, come to help us collect? It's going to be a long winter."

Now Cronaxx spoke, "As much as we want to help the beetles, now's the time to come back and lead the farm again." "Sprig is

destroying the farm, ignoring feeding the animals, and allowing pests to invade our farm," said Darrel. "We've been eating nothing but raw potatoes Hop pop," said Polly. "I'm having digestive strife. Digestive STRIFE!"

However, Hop pop wasn't keen on coming back. "I've grown since the last time you guys saw me," he said. "How long has it been?" "A day and a half," replied Polly. "I've got me a new life amongst the beetles," said Hop pop. "They taught me about community, equality, listening..."

Darrel spoke up, "Then listen to us, Anne saw Sprig sleeping in your bed now." That made Hop pop jump, "He WHAT?!" That made Hop pop travel all the way back to the farm. The rest of the group followed.

Hop pop made a grand entrance and jumped in front of Sprig's face. "I have returned!" he announced. "I don't believe it!" Sprig cried, and pointed to the group. "Backstabbers! Conspirators!"

"Us salamanders don't follow orders to those who are blind to objectives," said Cronaxx. "Sorry dude, we had a good run," said Anne. "But we didn't know what we're doing," said Polly. "It's time to realize that some suggestions don't work at all," said Tint.

Sprig was a one frog standing for his title. "We had a beautiful dream!" he cried. "But I guess I'm the only one willing to fight for it!" "Then it's time for you to wake up!" said Darrel as he gave Hop pop a small bell to ring.

"Sprig Plantar, I challenge you to a rematch! Winner gets control of the farm forever!" Hop pop takes his stand and glares down his opponent. "Sprig do you accept the challenge?" Polly asked. "I accept," replied Sprig.

Back at the lily pad, the two opponents cover themselves in mud again. "I beat you once, I can do it again," said Sprig. "I'll prove my way is right!" "We'll see," said Hop pop.

Anne sits on the log feeling nervous, but Darrel calms her down. "It's going to be okay, Anne. Cronaxx foresaw what happens next." "What happens?" Anne asked. "Let's just say things turn out for the better," Darrel replied. Anne takes a breath and says, "Okay."

Polly rings the bell, "Let the final challenge begin!" The two frogs charge at each other and give themselves a powerful tongue punch. The punch was so powerful that waves of mud collided within the lily pad. The two frogs were knocked down on opposing sides and slowly got back up.

"The group told me everything, Sprig," said Hop pop. "You're destroying the farm. Don't you see? Even if you win, you lose." Sprig, still defiant, kicks Hop pop down as he gets up. "So I'm just supposed to go back to the way things were? You never listen to us!" Hop pop grabbed him from behind and said, "And I was wrong! I know now that you can't work together unless everyone has a say. Jeremy taught me that, and Cronaxx's words lingered in my head."

Sprig flips Hop pop over, so that both frogs were facing each other. Hearing the words he never thought his grandfather would say, Sprig loosened his grip on him. "You mean it?" Sprig asked. "I have to admit most of my ideas were pretty terrible. I think we even caused permanent damage to the ecosystem."

"Yeah, but some of your ideas could work," said Hop pop. "We'll never know unless we try. I promise from now on to actually read your suggestions." Anne and Polly gasped at his change of heart, all while Darrel and the salamanders smiled in assurance.

"Promise?" Sprig asked. "Promise," replied Hop pop. Now filled with hope and belief that his grandfather stands true to his word, Sprig lets go of Hop pop and falls off the lily pad. He sighs with relief as he falls down. As he hits the mud, Polly rings the bell. "And the winner is HOP POP!"

Later that day, Hop pop comes out to see that the farm is back to the way it's supposed to be. Darrel prepares lunchtime for Clipper and

Bessie. "Supper time, Bessie and Clipper!" Feeling relieved that his companions were satisfied with food again made Darrel smile.

Out in the fields, Anne was shoveling dirt and breaking a sweat. "Think we could set up some shade around here, Hop pop?" Anne asked. True to his word, Hop pop plants a large mushroom in front of the sun. "Great suggestion, Anne," he said.

"And over there, I kept a small version of your swimming hole." Hop pop points to a small watering hole that's big enough for Polly to swim, but not large enough to attract bigger pests. "And best of all," said Hop pop as he hopped his way to the suggestion barrel. He moves it out of the way to show that the pit of fire is gone. "No more pit of fire."

Sprig feeling happy hugs his grandfather, "Thanks Hop pop," he said. Hop pop pats his head. "It would seem that the good leader has become a great leader after all," said Cronaxx. "Now the difficult part is to maintain that role," "If anyone can be a leader, Hop pop can," said Sprig.

Later that night, Hop pop was reading all the suggestions by the fireplace. Any of the suggestions that he thought that couldn't work, he tosses them into the fire. However he keeps the suggestions that could work.

Inside Bessie's stable, Darrel prepared to get some sleep after another fast delivery of goods into Wartwood. Anne arrived to talk to Darrel. "So you knew that this would happen?" Darrel nodded, "Of course, it was part of my future vision training."

Anne smirked, "You're starting to get more wise in this world." Darrel smiled, "Thanks Anne." "Wise and cheeky," Anne chuckled. Darrel playfully shoves her shoulder and the both have a good laugh. "So, what happens next?" Anne asks. Darrel simply replies, "The future is a mystery. Yesterday is history. But today is a gift, that is why it is called the present."

Anne laughs at his remark, just as Darrel was about to pull out his phone. "Want to see more embarrassing family moments?" Darrel asked. "You want to show them to me?" Anne asked. "What about your agreement with your parents?" "I've been thinking, after what we've been through I think we could use some entertainment," said Darrel. "Besides, I have more embarrassing moments than my own sisters."

"No way," said Anne. "You've got to show me some of those!" Darrel was uneasy but he took a deep breath. "If I show you, will you promise not to tell anyone else?" Anne locks her mouth with an invisible key. "It's in the vault," she said.

For the rest of the night, Darrel showed her some of his embarrassing moments that his family collected over the years. Even some of the videos he edited themselves to give him video editing experiences. The two laugh them off quietly while the salamanders are asleep.

The night grew late and the two decided to turn in for the night. "I bet Sasha had a good laugh seeing them," said Anne. "Well, she didn't see them," Darrel said. His statement shocked Anne. "As we grew up I feared that if I showed them to her, she would post them, humiliating me and my sisters. You're the only person I trust seeing these moments."

Anne was shocked, she didn't know that the boyfriend of her best friend didn't trust her enough to keep those videos privately. But to share with her made her feel different, but in a good way. She realizes that Darrel wants to trust her, so she came up with an idea.

She holds out her pinkie fingers and crosses her arms and legs. "If you trust me, then I will keep your promise," said Anne. Darrel crosses his arms and legs, then locks his pinkie fingers with Anne's. "I solemnly swear, till the ends of the Earth, that I will not tell a soul about what you showed me. So help me god."

Darrel smiles at her devotion to his trust and hugs her. "Thank you Anne. You really are my best friend. My best human friend." Anne returns her hug, "Anytime, Darrel." The two yawn again. "Goodnight Anne," said Darrel. "Goodnight Darrel," Anne said as she left for the basement. Darrel smiled for the rest of the night until he fell asleep.

You Are Who You Are

Chapter 11 - You are who you are

After another successful delivery of vegetables to the citizens of Wartwood, Darrel lands Clipper into his pen and joins the Plantars by the waters near the house. He takes the copper bags he gathered and put them into Hop pop's study. Then he comes out the back door to find the group lounging about.

"Another successful delivery today Hop pop," said Darrel. "Well done Darrel," said Hop pop. "You were right about your dragonfly friend, he is very helpful with fast deliveries." "The copper bags are in the study," said Darrel. "Good, we'll need them to pay off taxes," said Hop pop.

"Enough talk Hop pop, let's keep going," said Sprig. "What are you guys doing?" Darrel asked. "Just watch," said Sprig. "This one's going all the way baby." Sprig gargles a bit of saliva in his mouth, much to the disgust of Darrel, and spits into the water.

"Eugh!" said Darrel. "Impressive. Disgusting but impressive." Hop pop chuckled, "You call that a spit? Now watch this." Hop pop does the same thing, only louder and much more powerful. His spit take was much longer than Sprig's, it almost landed close to the water's edge.

"Eugh!" cried Anne. "Just when I thought you guys couldn't get any nastier." "You guys seem to get really competitive with just spitting," said Darrel. "That's because Spitting is practically a sport in Wartwood," said Hop pop. "We even have a town record," said Sprig. "Whoever breaks the record gets a trophy."

"And another good reason why I don't spit," said Darrel. "I mean is Polly even okay with this?" "Are you kidding me?" Anne said in a

disgusting tone. "She's probably disgusted as well." But Polly shouted, "That record is MINE!"

Then, Polly takes a big gargle and spits across the water and onto the edge. Darrel was surprised and disgusted that Polly was able to make a powerful spit, despite her age. Anne however was very disgusted.

"That's my little spitter," said Hop pop. "You could spit the frown off a widow," said Sprig. Darrel and Anne shuttered in disgust. Darrel runs off to take refuge in the stable for the time being. Darrel takes a breather and slowly regains his composure.

As he exits the stable, he spots Anne rushing out with Polly. "Anne! Where are you going?" Darrel asked. "Polly is in need of girl time," said Anne. "So I got Hop pop's wallet and we're on our way to expose Polly to a more womanly environment." "Help me Darrel! She's a crazy Lady!" cried Polly as Anne rushed into town.

Darrel shrugged it off and returned to the Plantar boys. "So, Anne left with your wallet and your granddaughter." "I know," said Hop pop. "Not sure what she wants with my wallet though, it's not like I have any money." "Less talk, more spit," said Sprig. The two frogs proceed to spit again, but Darrel leaves before they could.

Back in the stable, Darrel tends to Clipper's wings, cleaning them off of dirt. "Good as new, Clipper." Clipper buzzes his wings to dry them off. However it got Darrel wet instead. "Very funny buddy."

Just then, Tint and Cronaxx arrive. "Hey Darrel," said Tint. "Hey guys," said Darrel. "Are we all set for training?" Cronaxx asked. "I've got everything packed," said Darrel. "Let me get my stuff." Darrel grabbed his backpack and the trio headed out to the wilderness yet again.

Today, Tint and Darrel practice magical arm sways. In which the wizard must perform a traditional hand coordination to perfect a certain spell. While going through the motions, Darrel started to

visualize waves of water. Then the vision turned to the Plantars preparing to spit.

That disgusting thought made Darrel lose balance and fall down. "I'm okay," he said. "Then, get up," said Cronaxx. "Let's try again." Darrel nodded and started again. As the day progressed, Darrel either missed a step, wasn't in sync with Tint, or fell down again."

Another hour passes, and Darrel takes a breather. "Is everything okay Darrel?" Cronaxx asked. "You seem to be off focus today." Darrel looked down to the ground, "I've been distracted by the Plantars lately. They've been constantly spitting today, and it's got me grossed out. Even Polly was interested in spitting."

Cronaxx nodded in understanding, "I see. You've discovered something that they seemed to be interested in. Yet it disgusts you at the same time. Well Darrel, for what it's worth, it's not that bad to think about it."

Darrel was confused, "What do you mean?" "I mean, now you know more of the Plantar's interests and hobbies. You don't have to like all of their hobbies, but that doesn't mean that you should feel uncomfortable around them. After all, a leopard snake cannot change its spotted scales."

Darrel looks up to the sky and visualizes Sprig, Hop pop, and Polly spitting at the same time. But this time, Darrel smiled and stood back up. He continued practicing his arm sways again. But this time, he was in perfect sync and he remained focused throughout the routine.

Cronaxx smiled at his newly found focus. Tint did as well and said, "It would seem that this human has accepted their spots." Cronaxx nodded, "Only time will tell, Tint. But I think he's on the right path."

The trio venture out of the forest and prepare to return back to the Plantar farm. Before they could, Darrel decided to head into town. "I'll go see what the girls have been up to," he said. Tint nodded, "Okay, be back soon." The two wave, and Darrel heads into town.

Darrel enters the city of Wartwood and finds Polly alone at Stumpy's. He sits down next to her, "Hey Polly." "Oh, hey Darrel," said Polly. "How was your day?" "Uneventful, just some magic training here and there," said Darrel. "How about you?"

Darrel looks at Polly who expresses a glum look on her face. "I take it Girl Time was a bust?" "You could say that," replied Polly. "I thought me and Anne were going to do something exciting. But instead we went to the spa, did our hair, then she stuffed me in a dress! It was so dull."

Darrel listened to the little tadpole and smiled, "Sounds to me that a certain human is trying to change a leopard's spots." "I don't get it," said Polly. "Do you mean a leopard snake?" Darrel nodded, "The point is, we all have something we don't like. I don't like spitting, and you don't like getting frilly. But that doesn't mean we can't find things we can all enjoy together."

Polly smiles, "You really know how to make people feel better don't you?" "I've got a pretty great teacher," Darrel replied. "So, let's say we get you something to drink and go home?" Polly nodded, "Sure,"

Darrel placed a couple copper coins and asked Stumpy for two drinks. Just then, One eyed Wally came up to greet the two. "Hey there, Polly! Hello, monster!" "Hello, Wally," said Darrel. "Wanna join us?" "Why not?" Wally replied.

The three sat down and consumed their drinks. Wally gave off a good burp, while Darrel gave off a longer burp. The two laugh it off, until Polly beat them with a burp that's longer and louder than theirs. "Wow, Polly," said Darrel "That was amazing!"

Polly smiled, "Guess there are some things you aren't disgusted with." "Nope, my dad and I used to compete with burping all the time. It grossed out my mother and sisters, but we all had a good laugh," said Darrel. "However, you've got the burp of a titan," said Wally. "Thanks Wally," said Polly.

Just then, Anne showed up all out of breath. "Hey Anne," said Darrel. Polly was glum seeing her again. "What the heck, Polly?" Anne asked. "You ditched me? And now I find you rubbing elbows with Darrel and a local deadbeat?"

"That hurt my soul," said Wally. "Hey Anne, calm down," said Darrel. "You need to understand that Polly isn't into Girl Time." "Well you seemed pretty disgusted with her spitting," said Anne. "Well excuse me for at least trying to tolerate things that she's interested in," said Darrel.

"Darrel's right Anne," said Polly. "Him and Wally don't waste my time on stuff I think that are stupid and boring!" Anne gasped and said, "Well excuse me for trying to make you less of a disgusting little slob!"

That's when Darrel slammed down on the table. "Anne Boonchuy, THAT'S ENOUGH!" She covers her mouth, staring at Darrel who is stern, and Polly who looked hurt. "Now look what you've done. You've hurt her feelings! I think you should-"

Before Darrel could say another word, he turned his attention to an angry mob behind Anne. "Uh oh," said Darrel. "What is it Darrel?" Anne asked. Before she knew it, Anne was grabbed by a frog behind her. "Tuti caught thief!" said the frog.

Darrel smacked his head in embarrassment. "Wait, what do you mean thief?" Anne asked. "I totally paid." "With what, Anne?" Darrel asked. "Hop pop said he didn't have money in his wallet." That's when a frog walks up looking like the town sheriff. He is known to the people as the Constable. "Exactly little boy, Hopediah's broke," he said. Then he takes out what looks like an IOU note made by Hop pop. "Which makes the IOU's she's been handing out totally worthless."

The crowd split up to show Hop pop, Cronaxx, Tint, and Sprig in shackles. Darrel groaned in shame, "Oh great," "These chains represent our burden on society," said Sprig. "Dang it Anne, how

much did you spend?" Hop pop asked. "Yeah, how much did she spend?" Darrel asked the Constable.

He gives Darrel the bill from places that Anne spent across the town. He looks at the total cost, and suddenly his jaw drops. He takes a deep breath and regains his composure. "Wait right here," he said.

He rushes off to the farm and gets the copper bags from his recent deliveries. He returns to the town with the bags in his hand. "The good news is I have money," said Darrel. "But the bad news is, I may not have enough to settle the debt." "Well unless you can pay for the rest of the debt I'll have to do my duty and put you all in debtor's prison," said the Constable.

Tuti takes the copper bags and the group make their way to debtor's prison, which looks like a chicken coop. "How does debtor's prison work?" Tint asked. "It's basically gathering eggs for the town until the debt is paid off," replied the Constable.

"Well that doesn't sound so bad," said Anne. Darrel glares at the doors to the prison and asks, "Wait. What kind of eggs are we gathering?" The two frogs open the doors to reveal the group that they have to gather spider eggs. And the spiders are very hostile with frogs taking their children.

Some of the group screamed while Darrel and the Salamanders remained quiet. Trying to find a way to weasel out of the rest of the debt, Darrel looks around and finds the spitting trophy on top of a post. That's when he came up with an idea.

Before he could enter the coop, he asked again, "Constable, is that trophy made of gold?" "24 carot, sir," he replied. "Then I like to issue a challenge: If my friend Polly can break the spit record, we can use the trophy to pay off the rest of the debt."

Anne grabs Polly and places her on the standing line for the challenge. "Spit dude," said Anne. "Spit like you've never spit before." Polly glares down and says, "Let's do this." The rest of the

town gather around to make sure she breaks the record and settles their debt.

"Okay little lady," said the Constable. "You get three official chances. You ready?" The whole town waited in suspense. Polly started gurgling up a batch of saliva and spit it across the yard. However, it wasn't enough to break the record. Polly tried again, only this time it didn't get closer to the last place she spit.

The group grew worried, Polly only has one more official chance. "Something ain't right," said Hop pop. "What do you mean?" Tint asked. "She's not spitting at full force." Hop pop replied, "Almost as if she's ashamed."

"Yeah, I wonder why," said Darrel as he gives a shameful glare at Anne. Anne looks down feeling guilty, then decides to make things right. She goes to Polly's side and kneels down. "Hey, you okay?" she asked. "Yeah," Polly replied in a gloom tone. "I guess it's kind of hard to spit when you feel gross."

Anne looks to Darrel then back to Polly. "Polly, I'm the gross one," she said. "I tried to change someone that's perfect the way they are." Darrel smiles, "What she's trying to say Polly, is that she's sorry and she was wrong." Polly started smiling again and looked at Anne. "Yeah, I was wrong," she said. "Super wrong?" Polly asked. "Super wrong," Anne replied. "You're always wrong?" Polly asked.

"Hey hey hey," said Darrel. "She's not always wrong." Darrel smiles at Anne who smiles back at him. "Okay, just most of the time," said Polly. The two girls hug it out and that gives Polly the confidence she needs to spit again.

She gurgles her saliva again and gives off a powerful spit. The spit went so far and was so powerful that it hit the current record sign and went past it. The crowd cheered, as well as the group. Tuti takes the trophy and breaks it up, splitting each piece to the citizens of Wartwood.

In the end, Polly was left with a little piece of the trophy, claiming it as extra from the debt. "Well, your debt is repaid," said the Constable. "And my work here is done." He hops off into the sunset and the group watches.

"That was an amazing departure scene," said Darrel. "So what are we going to do with the extra gold?" Sprig asked. "I think I have an idea," replied Anne.

Later that day, Sprig places the new town record trophy on the post. The trophy looks like a gold version of Polly spitting. "What do you think Polly?" Cronaxx asked. "I love it!" Polly cried.

Polly turns her attention to Anne. "Hey sorry girl time was a bust," she said. Anne just shrugged it off, "Hey don't worry about it. I mean the more I think about it, the whole idea of girl time is pretty weird. I mean, who's to say boys don't like spas?"

This got Hop pop and Sprig's attention immediately turned to Anne. "You went to the spa without us?" Sprig asked. "Oh Anne, I love the spa," said Hop pop. "Did you get that fishy pedicure?" Anne nodded, "Yeah it was amazing." "I agree," said Hop pop, "You know they're actually eating the dead skin off the bottom of your feet?"

The group returns to the farm preparing to turn in for the day. Darrel feeds Clipper again and decides to go for a joy ride. He finds Anne getting fresh air and asks, "Hey Anne, wanna go for a ride with me?" Anne turns to Darrel getting ready to fly and she said, "Heck yeah,"

Anne takes Darrel's hand and the two fly off into the sky. And it was good timing, for the sky revealed an aurora borealis. It was the most beautiful sight they have seen in Amphibia. Clipper hovers in place as the two watch the lights dance. "How is this possible?" Anen asked. "I thought this happened in snowy regions." "It's science," replied Darrel. "Even I have trouble understanding how science works."

The two sit side by side smiling at the view. "This world is amazing on so many levels," said Darrel. "Of course, there are a lot of dangerous things out there. But it only depends on how I look at it."

"I agree, Darrel," said Anne. She looks to Darrel who is smiling at the sky. "I'm sorry Darrel." Darrel turns to Anne who is looking away from him. "For what?" he asked. "For getting you involved in this," she replied. "If I had just listened to you instead of Sasha, we wouldn't be in this mess. This is all my fault."

"You're not the only one at fault here, Anne," said Darrel. "I didn't do anything to stop you. I knew it was wrong, yet I kept my mouth shut to stay on Sasha's good side. If anything I'm partially to blame for our situation." Darrel looks down and says, "I may as well call myself a bad friend because of this,"

Anne was shocked to hear him say that. "Are you kidding me?" she asked. "You're not a bad friend. You're far from it. You are kind, honest, respectful, and most of all, you are loyal to the very end. If there were more people like Darrel Loyallitat, there wouldn't be any room for bad friends. In this world, and our world."

Darrel looks back to smile at Anne. Unaware that she's touching his hand, Darrel takes a deep breath and takes hers. This caused Anne to blush lightly. "Why can't more friends be like you Anne?" "Because there's no one else like me," she replied laughing. "I am who I am." Darrel nodded, "Indeed, you are who you are."

"Then I promise, no matter how long it takes," he said. "We will find Sasha and Marcy, and get back home." Anne smiled, "I know we will. Because I'm going to hold on to that promise along with you." The two hug it out, and then return to the farm to turn in for the night.

A Leap of Love

Chapter 12 - A Leap of Love

As time progresses at the farm, the better the chances are for the group to go beyond the valley of Wartwood. Hop pop was in his study, Polly was in the kitchen, Anne and Sprig were hiking in the wild, and Cronaxx was working on a potion in the stables.

Tint watched his great uncle work on a new potion. Until Darrel walked in with a few strings. He walked behind a haystack to see Darrel crafting something. Tint was curious with delight.

"What are you working on Darrel?" Tint asked. "It's just something to help me get through the days when I'm not training or farming," replied Darrel. He picks up a hollow block of wood that is shown to be poorly crafted.

"It's supposed to be a guitar," he said. He takes the strings and puts them together, creating his first guitar. "The craftsmanship on these instruments are much smoother back home. But this is my first hand made guitar I've ever made."

He plucks the strings and the guitar surprisingly makes wonderful music. "Have you ever played a guitar?" Tint asked. "Only when I was in elementary school," replied Darrel. "Now I just do it for fun."

He plays a melody making Tint sway to it's soothing tune. The music got Cronaxx's attention and put his potion brewing on hold. Darrel played his newly crafted guitar as fine as the wind blowing to the east. Even Bessie and Clipper swayed to his wonderful playing.

As Darrel stopped, he looked at his companions smiling at his talent. "That was amazing," said Tint. "If you thought magic doesn't exist in your world, then you'd be wrong," said Cronaxx. "Music can be quite the charm caster."

Darrel blushed in embarrassment, "Thanks guys, but I don't know if I can ever be a musician." "Why not?" Cronaxx asked. "Because Sasha told me that I would have to compete against other guitarists. She told me that I should save my talents until I know for sure I could outplay competing players. So I kept my head down until I knew for sure I could win a gig."

Cronaxx took a breath and said, "Behind every successful person, there's a lot of unsuccessful years." Darrel looks to the Salamanders. "There's always going to be guitar players as great as you," said Tint. "You can't keep your talents hidden based on the possible fear of losing. If you do that, you could lose your experience."

Darrel took their conversation to heart, and nodded. As he looks out the window, he finds Sprig and Anne returning from the wilderness. "Alright, they're back," he said.

He enters the house after Anne and Sprig just as Hop pop came down the stairs. "What have you two been doing?" Hop pop asked. "I've been looking for you all morning."

"Oh nothing," said Anne. Darrel looks to his friend recognizing her tone of voice. "I know that tone, Anne," he said. "Why do I feel like there's an 'except' in this conversation?" "That's because Sprig was totally flirting with a cute girl," replied Anne.

"A girl?" Cronaxx asked as he and Tint popped their heads through the door. "No kiddin'!" Hop pop exclaimed. "Is it true Sprig?" Darrel asked. "It's not like that," he replied. "Ivy Sundew and I are just friends."

"Ivy Sundew?" Hop pop asked. "Nobody move. I'm getting the courtship kit." He races up the stairs, with everyone else waiting in the living room. "This is so exciting!" Anne cried. "I'm going to go get my dating magazines! Brb!"

She rushes down to the basement to get her magazines, leaving Darrel, the Salamanders, Sprig and Polly together. "I don't actually

care," said Polly. "So Ivy's your friend?" Tint asked. "Yeah, she's my childhood acquaintance and occasional sparing partner," he replied.

Hop pop returns with a chest filled with mushrooms and high class outfits. "Here we go," he said. "The firefly formal is tonight. It's the perfect opportunity to begin the ritual." Anne pops out of the basement carrying magazines in her left arm.

"Ritual?" Darrel and Anne asked simultaneously. "Uh huh," replied Hop pop. Only frogs who have performed the ceremonial dance in the ceremonial garb are allowed to be wed." Anne took one of his illustrations and said, "Kitchy, I like it."

Darrel however, took a glance and said, "Blech, too fancy for my taste." "Guys!" Sprig popped up, "We're just friends! Besides, I'm already engaged to Maddie right? She gave me this nifty ring." He shows them a skeleton ring that randomly glows its eyes.

"Wait, Sprig got engaged?" Darrel asked. "How much did I miss?" "To put it simply, we needed to cook something for a competition we ended up losing," Anne replied. "We needed some bread for the recipe and Maddie's father agreed to trade, in exchange for Sprig marrying his daughter Maddie."

"Forget her," said Hop pop. "The Sundews have secret proprietary crops. Do you have any idea what that means?! If our families merge, WE'LL BE RICH!" Darrel stepped back out of fear. "Wow, so romantic," Polly said sarcastically.

Anne opens up one of her dating magazines "Ugh! I love these magazines," she said. She shows Sprig a page and says, "Look, Sprig. It says here that two-thirds of all soul mates start out as 'just friends'."

Sprig looked with shock and snatched the magazine out of her hands. "You trust these things?" Sprig asked. "Definitely. It helped with Darrel and Sasha," replied Anne. "If that worked on my friends, it'll work for you too."

"Could Ivy be my eternal love?" Sprig asked. "My soulmate? The cat to my bat?" "Well, we're about to find out," said Hop pop. "Cause I already asked her family." A mosquito comes in and gives him a note. He reads it and says, "They agreed to a date!"

"I guess one date couldn't hurt," said Sprig. Darrel grew uneasy, "Don't any of you guys think you're rushing this?" "Nope," said Anne in a confident grin. "Well as much as we like to help you out. Darrel is due for magic training," said Cronaxx. "Okay then, good luck to you boys," said Hop pop. "Now let's get going!"

The trio venture into the wilderness where they begin another training session. "Alright Darrel," said Cronaxx. "This time, we're going to learn about one of the most powerful elements of magic."

Cronaxx waves his hands revealing a pink aura. "Love." Darrel was confused, "I thought magic can't interfere with love." "It can't," said Tint. "Love is the most powerful magic of all. We can use love, but it can't be controlled by any wizard."

"That's why in today's lesson, we are watching love in action," said Cronaxx. The group keep venturing into the forest and discover a pack of fireflies near a watering hole. "These fireflies are amazing," said Darrel. "And we're just in time," said Cronaxx. "They are in season."

Tint looks across the lake to find Sprig and another frog sitting beside him. Darrel sees them and waves to the two. The group walked up to them to say hello. "Hey guys." Sprig called out. "Hey Sprig," said Darrel. "Is that Ivy Sundew?" "Oh hey there," said the girl.

"Oh that's right," said Sprig. "Ivy, meet Darrel. The other oddity from another world. Darrel, Salamanders, meet Ivy." Darrel shakes her hand, "Nice to officially meet you too," said Ivy. Then she gets up in his face, "Do you like being randomly attacked?" "Once in a while," replied Darrel. "My sisters attack me all the time, I'm at the point where I'm used to it."

"So what are you guys doing here?" Tint asked. "I thought that the formal was tonight." "It is," replied Ivy. "Our parents forced us into this because they thought it was a good idea." Darrel shook his head and said, "They shouldn't force something like this to you guys."

"Love is not something that you can just instantly claim. Love comes around naturally, whether you want it to or not." Sprig and Ivy listen carefully to Darrel's words. He takes out a photo of him and Sasha, giving him a kissy face. "Take me and Sasha for example. We met many years ago when she stood up for me. I liked her for that, and then we started hanging out. Eventually, that led up to us being boyfriend and girlfriend at the beginning of middle school."

"Wow, it looks like you two are happy," said Ivy. "Well, love is a complicated thing," said Darrel. "Falling in love is easy, but it's the staying in love part that's challenging. As time went on, Sasha and I spent more time with Anne and Marcy than we do ourselves. And when we spend time alone, it's usually when she needs something for herself."

"So, why do you stay with her if you don't think she loves you back?" Ivy asked. "I stayed because Anne said that's what good friends do," replied Darrel. "They stay by their side no matter what." Cronaxx looks to Darrel and says, "Remember what I told you out in the forest. You are in control of your own destiny. You can't let others tell you otherwise."

Sprig looks to Darrel nodding at the elderly salamander. "I guess Darrel's got a pretty great teacher, right Ivy?" Sprig looks around to try and find his friend. When all of a sudden, "AMBUSH!" Ivy attacks Sprig and the two spar with another in the bask of glowing fireflies.

Suddenly out of nowhere, the five hear screaming in the distance. "What's that?" Tint cried. "Sounded like screaming," replied Ivy. They look up to see two doves who have Anne, Hop pop, Polly, and Felicia Sundew in their talons. "Anne!" Darerl cried. "Our families!" Sprig Cried. "We gotta help them." Ivy gives Sprig a stick and the group follows in the bird's direction.

The group peek out from the bushes to find the group marinated in goo. The two birds start snuggling against each other out of love. "Love doves," whispered Cronaxx. "Any more facts on these birds?" Tint asked. "They mate for life and spend it massacring all living things," replied Cronaxx. "But nothing soothes them other than being romantic with each other."

That's when Darrel got an idea. He took out his hand made guitar and said, "I'm going to distract them with a love song. You guys sneak in the nest and rescue our friends. Once you're clear, I'll cast a sleep charm on them." The group nods and moves to the opposite side of the nest.

Darrel hides behind the tree and looks to his guitar. 'It's been too long,' he thought. 'Don't be afraid.' He takes a deep breath and plays his strings. His guitar playing caught the doves, and the group's attention. As he played, he got the dove's attention, putting his plan in place. But what he didn't expect was that Anne was lost in his song.

(I Love you too much - Song from *The Book of Life*)

I love you too much

To live without you loving me back

I love you too much

Heaven's my witness and this is a fact

I know I belong

When I sing this song

There's love above love and it's ours

'cause I love you too much

I live for your touch

I whisper your name night after night

I love you too much

There's only one feeling and I know it's right

I know I belong

When I sing this song

There's love above love and it's ours

'cause I love you too much

Heaven knows your name I've been praying

To have you come here by my side

Without you a part of me's missing

Just to make you my own, I will fight

I know I belong

When I sing this song

There's love above love and it's ours

'cause I love you too much

I loooooooooove you too much

I love you too much

Heaven's my witness and this is a fact

You live in my soul

Your heart is my goal

There's love above love

But its mine 'cause I love you

There's love above love

And it's yours cause I love you

There's love above love

And it's ours if you love me

As much

As Darrel finished his song, he saw Anne close to his face. Snapped from his own little world, Darrel cried out, "Anne!" Anne snapped out of her trance, falling back. This caused the doves to screech at them. "Get behind me!" Darrel cried to Anne. She listens to him and he prepares to use the staff.

But before he could summon a spell, "AMBUSH!" Sprig cried. He falls onto one of the doves and smacks him unconscious. Ivy throws a stick at the other dove and the two sleep together. "Amazing. Even in defeat, they're majestic," said Hop pop.

The group leaves the nest and Felicia turns to her daughter. "Come along now Ivy, let's get you home so I can apologize safely." Ivy takes her hand and the two return home. "Okay, that was fun," she said. "See ya, Sprig." Sprig waves goodbye to Ivy and watches her leave. "See ya Ivy."

"Come on, everyone," said Cronaxx. "We should do the same before the doves wake up." "Hey Darrel," said Polly. "Yeah?" he asked. "You and the salamanders don't have to worry about the ritual." "Polly's right," said Hop pop. "This little gal set us straight. We won't take out the courtship kit until Sprig is good and ready."

Darrel smiled, "I'm proud of you Hop pop." "Now I can focus on finding love for Polly," said Hop pop as he walked away with her in

his arms. "NOOOO!" Polly cried. Darrel shook his head as the salamanders walked out with him.

"Well, that's the end of that," said Anne. "Now you and Ivy can go back to being just friends." "Yep," said Sprig as he saw Ivy waving to him. Looking down on his frog friend, Darrel recognized the look in his eyes. "You just started falling for her, didn't you?" he asked. Sprig replied that he did.

As the three venture back to the farm, Anne decided to break the silence. "Hey Darrel, that was pretty amazing how you played the guitar." Darrel soon realized that Anne had not heard him play guitar in a long time. "It was nothing Anne," he said.

Anne however touched his hand, holding his guitar. "It was not nothing," she said. "That was incredible, and you should keep playing. I saw you smiling while you were singing, and that made me believe that you were happy."

"But what about other guitar players?" Darrel asked. "The only problem with other guitarists, is that there's no one like you. Even if you don't get a gig, I would still love to hear you play." said Anne. That made Darrel smile, "Thanks Anne."

The three reach the farm, but Darrel sits on a cobblestone wall and plays his guitar. Anne takes the time to listen to his soothing notes and falls half asleep by his side. Darrel takes notice and brings her back into the house.

'Thanks for giving me my confidence and my passion back, Anne. I don't think Sasha would've said those things,' he thought. She tiredly goes down the basement, unaware that Darrel held her hand until she was all the way in. Darrel returned to Bessie's stable and played his guitar until he fell asleep.

Nature Calls

Chapter 13 - Nature Calls

Today, the Plantars were seen packing up for a trip out of the farm. Darrel and the Salamanders helped them pack up Bessie. "This should be the last one, Sprig," said Tint carrying a backpack. "Thanks guys," he replied.

Darrel helped with the heavy loads and packed them on Bessie's shell. "Are you sure you guys are okay with Anne staying here?" he asked. "Don't worry, Darrel," replied Polly. "She'll have you guys to hang out with."

That's when Anne came out of the house holding something in her hand. "Guys!" she cried. "I brought a Bath Bomb from home and didn't even know it!" She holds in her hand a ball with a mixture of pink, purple, and light blue colors. On the tag, it says 'Peony Princess'.

"Oh yeah," she said in excitement. "I can't wait to try this baby out." That's when she was grabbed by their attention packing up. "Are you guys going somewhere?" she asked. "The Plantars are planning on going to a place called Camp Phlegmington," replied Darrel. "We're going to rough it outdoors and get filthy," said Sprig.

"Without me?" Anne asked. "Don't feel so bad Anne," said Darrel. "They didn't invite us to come along." "He's right," said Hop pop. "And besides, when we Plantars camp, we camp hard. No sense in you coming with us and feeling miserable."

Sprig hops on Bessie and says, "We know you hate bugs, dirt, rocks, and nature." "You're soft Anne," said Polly. "Like a baby." "Clearly you should be glad you and Darrel are not one of us," said Hop pop.

That statement made Darrel and Anne feel very upset. Sure, they're not entirely related, but their time with the Plantars made them feel like family to them. "I don't know about that," said Cronaxx. "Because in all my years of wizardry, I have never seen a more powerful source of magic than family itself. Even in the oddest of places."

"He's right," said Tint. "We feel like a family here. Right Darrel?" Darrel nodded his head, "Yeah, Tint is right. Just because we're not Plantars doesn't mean you're not family to us." "And besides," said Anne. "Who's to say I can't have a good time with you guys? Take us with you. Please?"

Hop pop was concerned, "Are you sure Anne? I wasn't kidding when I said rough." "And I wasn't kidding when I said you were soft," said Polly. "Super sure," replied Anne. Sprig believed her and said, "Come on guys. If Anne says she can handle it, she can handle it."

Hop pop soon gave in and said, "Well, alright then." "You feel comfortable coming along Darrel?" Sprig asked. Darrel smiled at the invite, "Sure, I'll come along." He turns to Clipper and says, "You okay for a few days, boy?" Clipper clips his jaw with acceptance. "He'll be okay."

Anne cheered, "Whoop whoop!" The two humans climb on Bessie's shell and sit next to each other. Sprig pops up beside them and shows them a honeycomb stick covered in sticky gunk. "Since you guys are coming, we need to cover you guys up with this gunk. Only way to keep the ticks away."

"Ticks?" Darrel cried. "Give me that." He takes the stick and smothers gunk himself on his face, arms, and legs. The Plantars and the Salamanders look at him with surprise. "What? I don't like ticks," said Darrel. "You try them when your dog brings them in the house once in a while."

He gives the stick back to Sprig who then brushes gunk on Anne's face. As Sprig pushes the stick again, she falls back and her face gets stuck on Darrel's face. Both teens blush in embarrassment.

"Totally not regretting this," said Anne. 'Already excited,' thought Darrel.

The group make their way to Camp Phlegmington, where frogs are roughing it like humans do in campgrounds. Sprig gets off of Bessie's shell after they've stopped. "I can't wait to tell scary stories," he said. "The more teen frogs running from deranged psychopaths, the better."

"I'm just happy to get off the farm," said Polly. "So much fresh air, and it's all mine." "I personally love the peace and quiet," said Hop pop. "A frog can really hear themselves think out here." He closes his eyes and hears his deep thoughts.

Darrel looks to the wilderness, looking to the tree lines, watching the rivers flow. Then he looks to Anne, who is seen feeling uncomfortable with her surroundings. "Are you sure you want to stay, Anne?" he asked. "There's no shame in going back." "Darrel's right, Anne," said Hop pop. "You two can take Bessie whenever you need to."

However, Anne wasn't having any of it. "How about we stop questioning my decisions, and get to camping together already? Who's with me?!" Sprig cheered, along with the other amphibians.

Darrel smiles at her determination. But this time, his smile was more heart filling. He takes out his photos of him and his friends. He looks to his photo with Sasha, and gives off a glum expression. 'Courage knows when it's time to change the relationship,' he thought. 'Cronaxx is right, maybe it's time to move on.' He covers the photos with his free hand, only showing Anne and Darrel among the two photos. 'And if Anne agrees with my decision, then she really is a true friend.'

Throughout the whole day, the Plantars and the Salamanders spend their day relaxing at the camp. Anne, however, was trying to stay alive. She almost got eaten by large fish and insects. Luckily, Darrel

fended them off with his magical skills. He spent most of his time with Anne then with the Salamanders.

That night, when everyone was asleep, Anne rolled off into a field of thorn bushes. Darrel tended to her wounds the next morning. Darrel places the honey gunk on Anne's back. "Ow!" she cried. "Sorry, Anne," said Darrel. "It's okay, just be careful," said Anne. I'm pretty sure those ticks cause internal damage."

Upset that the camping experience is damaging his friend, Darrel tries to make a stand. "Okay Anne, that's it," he said. "I'm getting Bessie, and we're going home." "What?!" she cried. "I'm tired of seeing you hurt yourself like this. And to be frank, I'm getting tired of putting my life on the line as well."

"Calling it quits, Darrel?" Hop pop asked. "It would appear so, Hop pop," replied Darrel. "Now don't you worry about a thing. Cause will be just fine without you." Darrel whistles for Bessie and takes her reins. But all that changed when he heard, "NO!"

The group looks to Anne in confusion. 'What are you thinking?' Darrel thought. "Look, I know it seems like I'm miserable, okay?" said Anne. "But I'm not. It's just that.." She looks around to see her surroundings and comes up with an idea.

"I'm not used to such easy camping." The group looks confused, but Darrel just facepalms himself. "I mean look around. Singing, butterflies, laughter? I guess I'm used to something more extreme."

That's when a big frog comes out and startles the group. "So this place ain't extreme enough for ya?" "Uhh, dang right it ain't." Anne replied. The frog laughs menacingly and says, "I can take you fold to a real campsite. One where there ain't none of this kiddie stuff, like shelter or plausible water."

"Would a more extreme experience make you happy Anne?" Hop pop asked. "Uhh, yeah?" Anne replied. "If Anne wants hardcore, we

go hardcore," said Sprig. "Lead the way Mr. uhhh," "Names Joe," said the frog, "Soggy Joe."

The group begins to follow Joe, but Darrel stops Anne to have a brief chat. "Anne, are you out of your mind?!" he cried. "You haven't ventured anywhere further than your own backyard." "What are you talking about?" she asked. "Anne, you know as well as I do that if we go into those parts of the forest, we'll die," said Darrel.

"So what?" she asked. "Isn't that better than staying at their farm?" Darrel shook his head, "Something's bothering you Anne, and I'm going to find out what it is." "Why don't you stay out of my business?" Anne asked aggressively. "Because I want to help you," replied Darrel. "Then you can help me, by dropping it." Anne replied as she walked back to the group. Darrel shook his head in defeat. 'I know you're better than this,' he thought.

The group venture deep into the darker parts of the forests, with Joe as their guide. Darrel and the Salamanders couldn't get rid of this feeling that they were being watched. The Plantars started to feel uncomfortable seeing the potential dangers surrounding the area. "We're here," said Joe.

The group bunk for the night, and Joe told them that if they were to survive he would take them out for pancakes. The group sat by the fire very quietly. Darrel looks to Anne, who is looking very anxious. Tint looks to Darrel with a concerned look. 'He must really care for her,' he thought.

"Gather round," said Joe. "And hear the tale of the Mud men." He crawls into the muddy marsh and begins his tale, "Born in the bowels of the bog itself, the mud creatures stalk the inky night lusting to devour any frogs that wander into their domain." He buries himself into the mud, but then jumps out, "JUST LIKE US!"

Joe laughs maniacally as he sits back on his log. "The Mud men fear only two things: Daylight, and being clean." Then he takes off into the bushes, stating 'nature calls'. Darrel sits next to Sprig and Anne

and asks, "You guys okay?" His question startled Anne. But, she denies any problems.

Just then, Joe comes out groaning. Until he falls flat on his face revealing a hatchet in his back. That scared the group out of their seats, and the fire fanned out. Darrel suddenly felt something grab him. "What is that?!" he cried. "It's just me, Darrel," replied Anne. "It's too dark to see."

"Hold on kids," said Hop pop. He takes some matches and lights the fire again showing off a light green flame. "Good thing I have my copper matches." The group suddenly gaze in fear as a giant mud creature towers over the bonfire.

"IT'S THE MUD MEN!" cried Sprig. Suddenly, more mud men crawl out of the bog and surround the group. "Never doubt a strange frog from a different world," said Darrel. "Everyone! Grab a torch!" Anne called out.

The Plantars each grab a torch, while Darrel and the Salamanders cast flame spells within their hands. As they prepare to defend themselves, the mud men throw mud on the flames, extinguishing them.

The mud creatures surrounded the group as they huddled together. "Really wish we could have sunlight right about now," said Sprig. "Or better yet, cleaning products," said Hop pop. That's when Darrel and Anne realized something. "We have something better," said Darrel. Anne takes out her bath bomb and says, "Everyone, take cover!"

The amphibians get down as Anne throws the bath bomb in the bog. "Fire in the hole!" Darrel cried. Just then, the bath bomb explodes in fragrant lights, wiping off the mud from the creatures. All that was left were long legged frogs in loincloths. "The jig is up boys!" cried one of them. And they all head for the hills.

The group stared in awe until they cheered in victory. "That was amazing!" Tint cried. "The way you said Bombs away, was pretty

cool, Darrel," said Sprig. "Guess we were wrong to doubt you both," said Hop pop. "You guys are used to extreme camping."

Darrel raised his hand and spoke up, "I never said I was used to extreme camping," said Darrel. "In fact, this was the first time I roughed it out by choice." Then it was Anne's turn to speak up. "I have a confession to make guys," she said.

"This extreme camping stuff was nonsense. I was miserable back there. I was just trying to cover it up." The group, aside from Darrel and Cronaxx looked in disbelief. "So you dragged us to this horror show for no reason?" Polly asked. "Twisted, I love it."

"I don't understand," said Sprig. "Why did you lie about it? Why be miserable?" "I guess I've been feeling left out lately," Anne replied. "I'm not a frog, I'm not a salamander, I'm not a Planter, I wasn't even invited on this trip. I really like you guys and I wanted to be with you. Miserable or not." The Plantars gather around Anne for a group hug.

"But the worst part is, I didn't listen to Darrel," said Anne. Darrel looks to his friend with a genuine smile. "He tried to tell me that it was a terrible idea, but I shrugged it off. I'm really sorry Darrel. I should've known better than to doubt a wizard in training. Can you forgive me?"

Darrel joined in on the hug beside Anne and said, "Not just a wizard in training. But, a true friend as well. I forgive you, Anne." Then Sprig started to cry, "I don't know if it's the sweet smelling toxins, or the overwhelming emotions. But dang it, I'm a mess."

"Next time, we'll include you Anne," said Hop pop. "Even if we know you'll hate it. Heck, we'll even ask Darrel to come along." The two humans smiled, "Thanks you guys," said Anne.

Suddenly, Darrel spotted Joe's body and screamed, remembering what happened to him. The body started groaning and he got up on his feet. It turns out the axe did no damage to him, and he explained that it was his axe proof vest that saved him. The group explained

what happened to Joe, and then they left the forest to get pancakes early.

Later the next day, after another day of magic training, Darrel was giving Clipper a wing cleaning. Anne and Sprig came out from the house. "Hey Darrel, you got a minute?" Sprig asked. "Sure," said Darrel. "I was just about finished with Clipper's wings." He climbs down from Clipper and he flaps his wings to get the excess water off from them.

Darrel enters the house with Anne and Sprig. "Alright, what's going on?" he asked. "We have a surprise for you," said Anne. The three venture down into the basement and find a set of bunk beds. Darrel's backpack was right next to Anne's, along with his makeshift guitar.

"Ta da!" the two exclaimed. Darrel was shocked and impressed. "Did you guys do all this for me?" "It's not just you," said Tint. He brought Darrel upstairs and found two other makeshift beds in the house. One in Sprig's room, and one in the study.

"Tint and I have become roommates," said Sprig. "And me and Hop pop agreed for me to stay in the study," said Cronaxx. "So long as you keep the place tidy," said Hop pop. "Who else likes to sleep being surrounded by books?" Cronaxx asked.

"We figured you guys deserve a place in our family," said Hop pop. "I thought we were already family when you took us in," said Tint. "Well, you guys are now," said Sprig. Darrel and the salamanders smile and thank the Plantars.

Later that night, Darrel was getting used to his new surroundings in the basement. He spots Anne holding something covered in cloth. Darrel saw the form of the item inside, and realized what it is.

"Is it time?" he asked Anne. Anne nodded, "It's time." The two exit the basement and gather everyone in the kitchen. "Okay guys," Anne began. "Now that we've been through a lot, there's something I like to share with you."

She takes out the cloth from her bag and puts it on the table. "This is how we got here," said Anne as she took off the cloth. Revealing the mysterious music box. The Plantars and the Salamanders were fascinated by the exterior design and image.

"It's some kind of crazy music box or something," said Anne. "Have any of you guys seen anything like it before?" Darrel asked. "Can Cronaxx and I take a look?" asked Hop pop. "Sure," replied Anne. "I mean, it's busted." Both elderly amphibians took curious glances at the box. "Nope, never seen anything like it," said Hop pop. "I may have," said Cronaxx. "Then again, my memory isn't as strong as it used to be. But I can tell you both some good news."

Both humans listened carefully to Cronaxx. "It's not broken," he simply said. "Just empty." Darrel gave an odd look, but Anne gave a hopeless look, "I know it's empty," she said. "Well, it was worth a shot."

Darrel looked at Anne and touched her hand. "We can't give up, Anne," he said. "There's got to be some records about this box." "Until then," said Tint. "We promise that we're all going to find a way to get you home." "Count me in on that promise," said Sprig. "Me too," said Polly.

"Thanks guys," said Darrel. "It means a lot to us," said Anne. "You're still touching hands," said Polly. The two instantly looked at each other and swiped their hands away blushing in embarrassment.

Hop pop suddenly yawns, "Well that's enough excitement for me today. I think I'm going to turn in." "I think I am too," said Cronaxx. The kids wish them goodnight, as they turn in as well.

Cronaxx follows Hop pop into the study where he was looking through one of his books. Cronaxx walks up behind him and says, "I know when you're lying," Hop pop turns in surprise, "How could you know?" "Hello? I'm a wizard," Cronaxx replied. The two continue looking at the book Hop pop opened up. They find the page that

says, 'Calamity Box. Danger! Destroyed! Beware!' It shows the box with the four gems and a frog skull.

Hop pop glared at the page, while Cronaxx looked with surprise. "It's just as I feared," said Hop pop. "Me too," said Cronaxx. "I thought for sure I would never see that box again." "Listen Cronaxx," said Hop pop. "We can't tell the kids about this. If they found out more about this box, they'll be in danger wherever they go."

Cronaxx was unsure about this. "I don't know, Hop pop. I partially blame myself for what happened long ago. I suffer for my actions every day." Hop pop was stern, "Cronaxx, if my grandkids were to know more about this box, they'll be in danger. And so will your great nephew. We can't let anything happen to them, can we?"

Cronaxx was at a crossroads. On one hand, he can't let his past catch up to him and leave his nephew in the dark. On the other hand, he can't put him in danger because of the mistakes he made. In the end, Cronaxx agreed. "Fine, we'll keep this quiet. But if the kids somehow find out we're hiding something, I'm not going to keep them in the dark any longer."

Hop pop kept his eyes on the old, but wise Salamander. "It's my decision. They can't know anymore about that box." Cronaxx gave a scowl look and said, "Those who remain in the dark, fail to see the light." The two amphibians part ways and retire for the night.

Ordinary Sick Day

Chapter 14 - Ordinary Sick Day

A new day dawns in Amphibia, but it isn't like any other day. Today is a rainy day. The clouds were dark, and rain came pouring down like waterfalls. Clipper was taking rest in a hand made shelter Darrel and the Salamanders made earlier. Darrel took one last look before he closed the front door, and made his way to the basement.

"Clipper is looking comfortable in the shelter, so long as it holds up," he told Anne. Anne looks out the basement window, feeling relaxed. Darrel smiles and looks out with her. They watch the rain falling from the sky, water droplets appear on the windowsill.

Anne returns to her bunk and closes her eyes. "Nothing like sleeping to the sound of rain," she said. "Does it work?" Darrel asks. "If you allow it," Anne replied. Darrel climbs to his bunk and closes his eyes as well.

As he listened to the rain with his eyes closed, he fell into a bliss-like state. He could see himself in a cave, glowing with algae. He danced to the water droplets, leaping and spinning to the rhythm. Before he knew, he started dancing on water.

Soon that water started to take the form of a faceless dancing figure. The two dance in harmony and in synchronization. Just as Darrel was about to touch its hand, he was interrupted by a noise.

"ANNE, DARREL, MOVE!" Hop pop shouted as he opened up the basement door. Darrel and Anne woke up in shock. Darrel fell out of his bunk and landed flat face on the floor.

"This is the third time I called you," said Hop pop. "What? No it isn't," said Anne. "No?" Hop pop asked. "Okay then, this is the first time I'm

calling you." Darrel lifts his face up to Hop pop as he says, "LET'S GO! We've got work to do!"

Darrel and Anne were about to leave until Darrel said, "You were right Anne, listening to rain is fascinating." Anne smiled and the two enter the living room with the rest of the group.

"Okay, we got a full day of hard work ahead of us." He gives the group rain gear that consists of ponchos and plastic bags to keep their feet dry. "How can we have another hard day of work in a rainstorm Hop pop?" Tint asked.

"This here ain't no ordinary rainstorm," said Hop pop. He points to the window, showing that the winds have kicked up to the point that anyone can be blown away. They see Wally get hit by a tree and fly away.

"We've got to cover up the crops before they're destroyed," said Hop pop. "It'll be hours of back breaking work." "Maybe," said Cronaxx. "But there are a good number of us. Could be shorter than expected depending on our cooperation."

"Now that you mention it, you're right Cronaxx," said Sprig. "We can even use magic to calm the storm." Tint shook his head, "We can't Sprig. I tried calming a storm last time, it just came down twice as hard." "Magic can't be the answer to everything," said Cronaxx.

Darrel nodded, "Whatever it takes to save the farm. Let's get to work." But all that talk was interrupted by a coughing sound coming from Anne. "Anne, are you okay?" Darrel asked. "No," Anne replied all stuffy. "I think I'm sick."

Hop pop looked closely at Anne, seeing no signs of sickness. But he was shocked knowing her tongue is very short. Darrel was concerned about her sudden behavior. He knows that Anne isn't sick, but he didn't say anything.

"I've got human stuff going on that you don't know anything about," said Anne. "Oh no, sounds like I've got a bad case of the mocha lattes." "That sounds horrible," said Hop pop. "Come on everyone, let's stay away from Anne and her illness."

The group prepares to venture out in the rain, and they wish Anne to get well soon. Darrel was the last to leave the house. But before he did he said, "Get well soon Anne. I don't know what I'd do without you." This made Anne blush lightly, and feel a little guilty.

Outside, the group went straight to work. They started with covering up the crops. Thankfully, the group pulled together and tied down the tarp over the fields. Darrel was looking a little gloomy, which caught Cronaxx's attention.

"Are you okay, Darrel?" Cronaxx asked. "I know that she's faking it," replied Darrel. "Mocha Lattes? That's just the name of a drink from back home." Cronaxx nodded and said, "I knew that too. Whatever happens to our health will be her responsibility."

Darrel looks to his hand made shelter, which is shaking violently next to the stables. Darrel rushes to Clipper and unties the roof of his shelter, causing it to fly away. "Go on, Clipper. Get clear of the storm," said Darrel. Clipper starts flapping his wings and flies off to find stronger shelter, not too far from the farm.

For the rest of the day, the group endured the hard rainstorm. But they covered the crops without wasting any more time. "Well done everyone, we completed much quicker than we did before," said Hop pop.

Just then, Darrel sneezed, "AH CHOO!" "Bless you, Darrel," said Sprig. "Let's get inside." The group heads inside the house with their ponchos losing their hoods. Anne looks to the group, wrapped in a blanket. "Oh you're back," she said weakly.

Darrel sneezed again, grabbing Anne's attention. "Woah, are you okay, Darrel?" Anne asked. "I don't think so, Anne." Darrel said in a

stuffy tone. "I think I've come down with something. But it looks like I'm not the only one."

Anne looks to see Hop pop covered in sticky goo oozing out of his skin, Polly unable to see, Sprig's tongue extending out of his mouth, Tint feeling cold, and Cronaxx feeling hot.

"You're all sick?" Anne asked. Darrel nodded, "It was brutal out there. But at least we got all the work done, and you're not sicker than before." Anne realized that her lie made her friends sick, and felt more guilty than before.

"There is a way to make us feel better," said Cronaxx. "However, this spiritual healing only works on salamanders." The two salamanders retreat to the study, leaving Anne with the Plantars and Darrel.

"Now, who's going to take care of us?" Polly asked. Knowing she made a selfish choice, Anne decided to make things right. "Me. I'm going to take care of you guys," she declared. "But Anne, you're sick too," said Sprig. "*coughs* Sure am buddy. But you all are way important to me," said Anne.

Darrel and Hop pop smile at her decision. "That's uncharacteristically generous of you," said Hop pop. "Aw you know, I do what I can," said Anne. "Now let's get you all better!" Just then, Polly sneezed, causing her to fly across the living room.

Darrel stayed in the basement while Anne started taking care of the Plantars. He didn't mind waiting for Anne to take care of her. All he knew was that she was going to help her friends get better. Meanwhile, in Hop pop's study, the salamanders were being protected in a magically encased bubble. They sat in a meditative state in order for the magic to work.

Darrel looks back to the times when he got sick when he was 11 years old. His mother would usually feed him soup, and his father would read his fantasy books to make him sleep. His sisters would check up on him from time to time after school. His friends, both

Anne and Marcy would show up to his house, and bring him his homework so that he doesn't fall behind on school.

His trip to memory lane comes to a halt when he hears Anne enter the basement. "Hey Darrel, how are you doing?" Anne asked calmly. Darrel groaned, "Anne? Is that you? You can put my homework on my desk."

Anne chuckled slightly, "There's no homework today, Darrel." She takes a washcloth and places it on Darrel's forehead. Darrel smiles at her actions and she smiles back. "Thanks Anne, I don't know what I'd do without you," said Darrel.

"Just get some rest, I'll be making my special soup soon. You'll feel better in no time," said Anne. As Darrel prepared to rest up, he said, "Sasha didn't come to see me when I'm sick right?" Anne shook her head, "She just didn't want to get sick."

As Anne leaves, Darrel starts to talk to himself, "If Sasha was your friend, she would've checked up on you. She didn't come because she cared about her health. I thought she cared for me. Ever asked her what you wanted? I don't even know what I want anymore. I know what you want. You want to write songs, be artistic, and have friends that care about you. I didn't want to be stuck in this world, but here I am and I feel excited. I'm free from doing pathetic favors that people wanted me to do. I can just watch pretty lights while I dance to their movements. And she can join me and we can dance the night away. Because I love you, Anne."

Anne eavesdropped on his delusion as she came down to check up on him. "What did you just say?" Anne asked. Darrel turns over facing Anne, but eyes closed. "Huh? What?" He mumbled to sleep. Anne smiled with her cheeks blushing, then returned to making her soup.

Darrel wakes up, feeling rested but still stuffy from the rainy day. He looks over to the nightstand to see a glass of water with a note that

says, "Stay hydrated. -Anne." Darrel takes a sip, 'Thanks Anne, you're a good friend,' he thought.

Then, he heard Anne calling out, "Soups On!" Darrel smiled, for he knew that soup could help him feel better. He started to slowly climb out and make his way to the kitchen. He finds the Plantars sitting at the table, and Anne preparing her soup.

"Hey Anne," he said calmly. "Hey Darrel, how are you feeling?" Anne asked. "A bit better," Darrel replied. "What's on the menu tonight?" "My famous broccoli kale super soup," said Anne. "Now with cricket and mushroom."

She gives Darrel his bowl and the four sick workers eat up. As Darrel finishes his soup, he takes a deep breath. "So, feeling any better?" Darrel smiles and says, "I think it's working Anne. I'll just need a bit more rest, and plenty of water."

However, Sprig's tongue sticks out. Spilling Hop pop and Polly's soup bowls on their heads. "Eh, nope," said Polly and Hop pop. "Maybe, it doesn't work on frogs," said Darrel.

Suddenly, Darrel spots something on Hop pop. "Uh Hop pop, your legs are turning red," he said. Hop pop looks down to see his legs instantly turned red. "This can't be good," he said.

The group enters the study and finds Tint and Cronaxx out of their health bubbles. "Hey guys," said Tint. "We've just recovered from our colds." Cronaxx looked at Hop pop's red legs and said, "Oh no, is it what I think it is?"

The group get the book of ailments and find the page that describes Red Leg. "Yep, it's Red Leg alright," said Hop pop. "Is that a bad thing?" Anne asked. "Yeah Anne," said Polly. "The red leg works its way up your body. And when it finally covers you completely, you... you..."

"You depart from this ungrateful world," finished Hop pop. Darrel gasped and Anne cried out, "WHAT?!" "What do we do?" Tint asked. "Just find me a corner for me to pass away in," replied Hop pop. He points to a corner in the study. "That one will do."

Anne cries out, "No! We are not picking a corner. There's gotta be something that can fix this. There has to be." "Actually, there is," said Cronaxx. He pulls out the treatment page of Red Leg and shows it to the group. "Red Leg can be cured by waiting in a mineral pond, high in the mountains."

"The mountains?" Hop pop teased. "Heh, the journey alone will do me in." He goes to pick his corner and waits for his time. But Anne would not allow it, "Stop it, Hop pop. Sorry, but you're going to live to see another day. I am going to take you to that mineral pond!"

The group cheered, until Darrel sneezed. "ACHOO! I think I'll sit this one out. I'm still not a hundred percent." Then Sprig shoots his tongue out at Hop pop. "Dang it, boy!"

"So, Darrel, can we borrow Clipper for the journey?" Anne asked. "Sorry Anne," said Darrel. "Clipper flew off to escape the storm. If he's taking shelter in the trees, then he won't leave until the storm passes. You'll have to take Bessie."

"Tint, you'll have to stay here with Darrel in case he needs something," said Cronaxx. "You can count on me, Uncle," said Tint. The two wave goodbye as they venture to the mineral pond.

"So, what do you want to do Tint?" Darrel asked. "What I want to do is get you back into bed and make sure you rest up," said Tint. So he takes his human friend back down to the basement and Darrel climbs into his bunk to rest up.

"Thanks Tint," said Darrel. "It's the least I could do," he replied. "Would you like anything else?" "Just some water to keep myself hydrated," said Darrel. Tint leaves for the kitchen as Darrel takes some time to rest.

While Darrel sleeps, the storm eventually calms down and Clipper returns to the farm. Tint returns a few minutes to check up on Darrel. He touched his forehead and felt his temperature going down. 'You'll feel better before you know it,' he thought.

Darrel eventually wakes up again and decides to watch Anne and the Plantar's progress. He casts a vision spell and sees Anne and the group riding on a mosquito all the way to the top. 'Wow Anne, good thinking,' he thought.

He hears the basement door open and looks to see Tint enter with a fresh cup of water. "Oh, hey Darrel," said Tint. "How are you feeling?" "Much better when I'm resting," replied Darrel. "Anne and the others just reached the mineral pond. Want to watch?" Tint nodded, "Sure."

The two watch as the group splashes on top of the mountain and soak up the mineral water. "They made it," said Darrel. "Looks like Polly and Sprig are infected too." Tint looks to see the Plantars all covered in red. "Will this mineral pond work?" Darrel asked. "It should work," Tint replied. He gets the book from the study and reads the information about Red Leg.

"The book says that the pond should cure them instantly," said Tint. "But how come they're still red?" Darrel asked. "That shouldn't happen," replied Tint. "Unless..." He looks at the book again and finds new information. "Huh, turns out that Red Leg isn't the only thing that can turn an amphibian red."

Darrel looks at the book and sees a red mushroom illustrated on the page. "There's a certain mushroom that shows the exact same symptoms," said Tint. "Anne said she added that mushroom to her soup. It must've been what caused the Plantars to turn red."

The two sigh in relief, then Tint realizes something. "Uh, Darrel," "Yeah?" Darrel asked. "Hop pop didn't use that mushroom for eating," said Tint. "He used it to wash pots, clean the bathroom floors, and Bessie's stable."

Darrel widens his eyes, realizing that he ate the mushroom along with the Plantars. He looks to his stomach and realizes that he's not feeling any worse than before. He shrugs it off and just drinks more water.

After his drink, Darrel looked to his friend. "So Tint, how long have you had magical powers?" he asked. "For as long as I can remember," replied Tint. "Great Uncle Cronaxx said that our powers run in the family for years. My Great Aunt Alexphia, Cronaxx's sister, fell in love with a soldier. Ever since then, my family had magical abilities from elemental powers, to healing spells. Sometimes, my family wants to try something else other than magic. So, Cronaxx helps teach them how to control their abilities to avoid hurting anyone. As for me, I started learning my abilities when Cronaxx told me of my heritage. I was excited, but cautious. I want to learn as much as I can, but I don't want to learn everything. There are dark forbidden spells that no one should learn." Darrel took his words to heart and prepared to rest again.

After the sunset, the group returns to the farm. They find Clipper sleeping by the stable again. "Looks like it's safe to uncover the crops," said Cronaxx. "We'll get to it first thing tomorrow," said Hop pop.

They enter the house and find Tint and Darrel drinking tea. "Hey guys, how'd it go?" Tint asked. "Apparently, the Plantars are going to be just fine," said Cronaxx. "How's our new apprentice doing?" "Much better, Cronaxx," said Darrel. "Thanks to Tint's herbal tea, I'll be fit as a fiddle tomorrow."

"That's good," said Anne. "Cause we're going to uncover the crops for the Plantars tomorrow." "Alright everyone," said Hop pop. "Let's get some rest. We'll need to conserve our energy if we're going to do anything." Everyone nodded in agreement and all went to bed.

Down in the basement, Anne and Darrel climb in their bunks. "Hey Darrel, I've got a question," said Anne. "What is it?" Darrel said. "Do you remember anything when you were sick?" Anne asked.

Darrel thought long and hard, and he said, "Vaguely, all I remember was I was half asleep from the fever. I tend to say things when I hallucinate. Why? Did I say anything weird?"

Anne looked down, not wanting to repeat what he said to her. So she decided to tell him a half truth. "You were just saying a lot of gibberish nonsense," said Anne. "Even I didn't know what you were saying." "Okay, Anne," said Darrel. "I'll see you in the morning." "Goodnight, Darrel," said Anne.

She looks up to Darrel's bunk and blushes quietly. She whispers, "You told me you love me. If you love me as a friend that's fine. But I sometimes think maybe, we could be more than friends." She slowly closes her eyes and drifts off to sleep.

Toad Tax

Chapter 15 - Toad Tax

Darrel is seen in the basement writing in a makeshift journal that Tint gave him a few days ago. After everything he went through, he thought it would be a good idea to document his time in Amphibia without using a camcorder.

Darrel opened up his journal to see his written progress in the first few pages.

'Today, Tint gave me this journal. Seeing that I don't have my video equipment, this will be my only option to document my journeys in the world of Amphibia. I arrived in this strange new world one day after Anne opened up a strange music box back home. I stumbled into strange marshlands you'd find in a Creatures and Caverns scenario that Marcy would make up. I survived on my own for a few days, until I met a couple of salamanders. Tint and Cronaxx are known as Salamander wizards. Who'd have thought?'

[Drawing of the Eternal Staff] - The Eternal staff.

'Ever since I took possession of this magical staff, I have gained magical abilities. I've kept them under control under the watch of my mentors, the salamanders. It even helped me reunite with my best friend Anne.'

Darrel flips through his pages until he gets to blank pages. He takes his pen and writes down his latest entry.

'The last few days were interestingly eventful. Me and Anne saved Stumpy's restaurant from closure, by a critic named Albus Duckweed. Despite the attack from a Kraken, he was so impressed with the experience that his own food tried to eat him.'

[Drawing of the Kraken attacking the frogs] - It was amazing to see a Kraken up close and personal.

[Drawing of Anne and Darrel in Thai attire] - Anne and I look good in Thai attire.

'It was also joyful to see Stumpy regain his passion in what he thought could've been his last days running his restaurant. Now that the fiasco is over, I think he's going to enjoy running his restaurant. As for Anne and I, we were just lucky he doesn't need our help anymore.'

'After helping Stumpy out, it was time to return our focus to the farm. The next day, we went to the farmers market to sell vegetable products on Hop Pop's vegetable stand.'

[Drawing of Hop pop's stand] - Honesty first

'Before we could get started, Toadie came in with a message from Mayor Toadstool. Stating that he's quadrupling the rents of the stands and wants the money in three days. The townsfolk were upset with the sudden change, especially Hop pop. At the rate we sell vegetables, we would lose the stand. Luckily, Anne came up with an idea.

[Drawing of a jar of juice] - Plantar's Potion

'Anne took some vegetables and crafted a new product called Plantar's Potion. At first Hop pop was unaware of how to sell the potion. So I took over the sales pitch, and grabbed everyone's attention. As copper coins were falling like raindrops, Hop pop stepped up on production.'

'At first we were doing so well. I didn't like telling half truths all the time, but it helped with selling and we were trying to save the stand. The only thing that kept reminding me of the stand's true purpose was its motto: Honesty First.'

'Suddenly, the worst was within our grasp. We ran out of produce to make more potions. Hop pop didn't want to give up so easily, so he began to dig through garbage cans and compost bins. Thankfully, Cronaxx and I convinced him to accept the fact that it's over. We are about to lose the vegetable stand. Hop pop grew upset, but he looked back at the Plantar's motto. He looks up to the sky and hopes that his father would understand. With a heavy heart, Hop pop agreed with us.'

[Plantar's potion sticker]

'On the third day, we prepared to pack up the last of our vegetables from the stand and prepare for the end. We told the townsfolk the bad news, and they grew disappointed. But we told them that if they should ever crave for more Plantar's Potion, that they stop by the Plantar's Plantation. As we packed up, Toadie came by to give us the eviction notice. Now that we're unemployed, we'll need to start thinking of new ways to sell our product.'

As Darrel closed his journal, Tint called him from the basement door. "Come on, Darrel. We're about to leave for the store." "I'm coming, Tint," said Darrel. He grabs his staff, and makes his way outside.

The group arrives at the general store for supplies. Darrel and the Salamanders were on the other end of the general store obtaining mushrooms for medicinal potions. "It would seem that the wizards in this world are more like doctors than fighters," said Darrel. "It's better to give, than to receive," said Cronaxx.

Darrel grabs the last mushroom off one of the shelves. Then, a mother frog comes in hoping to get the same mushroom. "Excuse me, scarecrow," she said. "I hope that wasn't the last mushroom, because it's my son's birthday and I was hoping to make his favorite soup."

Darrel looks at the mother frog with guilt. He wanted to help make her son happy, but Cronaxx needed ingredients for his potions. But Cronaxx arrived and nodded at Darrel, "It's okay. Let her have it."

Darrel smiled and gave her the last mushroom. "Oh thank you, scarecrow," she said. "My name is Darrel Loyalität," said Darrel. "Please give my wishes to your son." The mother nodded and walked away. Darrel smiled at his generous actions.

Suddenly, he hears Anne slip and he rushes to her side. Before he knew it, he slipped on the wet floor as well. "Hey! Didn't you read the sign scarecrows?" the employee called out. The store burst into laughter by their accident and the two exit the store.

They regroup with the Plantars and the Salamanders feeling a bit down. "You guys okay?" Sprig asked. "It's just that, we've been here for almost a month. And the townspeople still treat us crummy," said Anne. "Sometimes I wish they were nicer, like me," said Darrel.

"Oh that's just the way these frogs are," said Hop pop. "Slow to accept, and even slower to respect. It's actually our town motto." "You'll find a way to gain their respect in your unique ways," said Cronaxx.

In an attempt to cheer her up, Darrel places his hand on her shoulder. "You can't let them get to you, Anne. There will always be people who say mean things because we're different. And sometimes their minds can't be changed. But there are other people who don't judge us with how we look or where we came from. Their words are what should truly matter."

Anne smiled at her friend and hugged him. "Why can't everyone be like you?" Darrel returns her hug and remains silent. "Come on, kids," said Hop pop. "Let's continue our morning with bug pancakes." "Sounds like a great idea," said Darrel. "We've been here for too long."

Along the way back, they ride past a freshly carved statue of Mayor Toadstool kissing a tadpole. Darrel expressed a disgusted look, concerning his attitude towards everyone. "Bad taste?" Sprig asked Darrel. "Yeah," he replied.

Suddenly, Bessie started freaking out. Something bad was approaching. Darrel and Anne calm Bessie down, just as a large spider rushed into town. The spider was driven by three buff amphibians wearing iron armor. They have rough skin, tough as nails.

Darrel realized who those were before he could ask Cronaxx. They arrive at city hall, where Toadstool gave them a list. "Who are those guys?" Anne asked. "My gut tells me that they're toads," replied Darrel. "Indeed they are," said Tint. "These toads are from Toad Tower," said Hop pop. "They rule the entire valley."

"Where is Toad Tower?" Darrel asked. Sprig takes out a map that shows the tower's location. "The big scary tower is located deep in the swamp. And the toads that live there, are the valley's fiercest warriors."

"Cool," said Anne. "Cool yes," said Hop pop. "But they can be a rough sort," said Cronaxx. "That kind of roughness can be unpredictable. That's why we must be cautious of them at all times."

Out of curiosity, Anne, Darrel, and Sprig go over to see them. "Hey guys," greeted Sprig. "So you're from Toad Tower?" "Sure are, runt," one of the toads replied. "My name's Sprig actually."

The sarcastic toad didn't care until he spotted Anne and Darrel. "What are they? Some kind of gangly new critters I've never seen before." "I wonder what they taste like?" The second toad asked.

The three get in a defensive stance, "Us humans are not for eating," said Darrel. "We'd probably taste terrible." The second toad grabbed her weapon, "Is that a challenge?" She charges at the three, only for Darrel to cast a shield. The toad swings at them, only to be pushed back by her actions. Then, Darrel lowered her shield and Anne hit the toad with her racket.

The toads were shockingly impressed by their skills. "Such strength and power," said the first toad. "I don't know what you are, but you

two got fire in you." As the toads left, Anne felt a sense of pride. Darrel and Sprig however, felt the exact opposite.

The group prepared to leave, Anne considered thinking about hanging with the toads for a bit. "They seemed pretty cool," she said. "Anne, there's something about these toads that I don't like," said Darrel. "Are you jealous I think they're cool?" Anne asked. "No," replied Darrel.

"If you're going to hang with these toads, Anne. Then, I'll stay too. I need to know why they're here," glared Darrel. "Don't dally too long you two," said Hop pop. The amphibians ride off to the farm leaving Anne and Darrel with the toads.

Anne approaches the toads and greets them. "So, who are you guys?" she asked. "The names Bog," said the first toad. He points to the toad with the helmet, "The silent one there is Mayer, and Fens here, you already met." Fens gives off a gesture that acknowledges their first encounter.

"I'm Anne, and this is Darrel," said Anne. "What brings you guys to Wartwood?" Darrel asked. "Every year, this town sends taxes to the Tower," replied Bog. "And this year they came up short. So, the mayor gave us this list of frogs that didn't pay, and we're just here to collect."

"Say, we could use someone like you guys." Darrel and Anne were surprised, "Really?" "Yeah, you guys got inside knowledge of this town," said Bog. "It would make our job a whole lot smoother." Bog offers them both two toad badges. "Look, I appreciate the offer," said Darrel. "But unfortunately, I'm going to have to say no."

"Yeah, I'm not sure any of this is our business," said Anne. "You know the best part of wearing this badge is how everyone in this town will have to treat you with respect," said Bog. Anne perked up and said, "Give me that ding dang thing."

Darrel was most surprised to hear her say that. "What?!" Bog gives her the badge, a sword, armor, and she rushes off to the Plantar farm. "Anne! Wait!" Darrel cried. "You know, we could use a powerful wizard like you on our side," said Fens. Darrel glares at the toad. "I'm still going to have to politely refuse," he said.

Before he could turn away, he picked up a strange scent from Fens. Something oddly familiar to him. But he kept his mouth shut, and followed Anne back to the farm.

Back at the Plantar Farm, Hop pop and Cronaxx were playing a game of what looked like frog chess. Cronaxx played his final move and said, "Checkmate." Both elders shook hands, "That's the last time I underestimate a wizard," said Hop pop.

Suddenly, Anne bursts in the door wearing her toad armor. "Guess who became a toad tower deputy?" The group was shocked and appalled. Darrel dashes in after her, wheezing. "Also, check out this cool sword Bog gave me." Anne draws her sword and swings it around.

"Anne, when Hop pop said earn the town's respect, he didn't mean join a gang," said Cronaxx. "I don't believe this," said Anne. "They're not a gang, they're just here to do a job. Now if you'll excuse me I have some respect to enjoy."

Darrel blocked her path and said, "Anne, please listen to me. You can't trust those toads. They are brutal, reckless, and small minded. The definition of bad. I've seen plenty of mob movies to know that they're only here to intimidate. Would you want to live with yourself if you were part of it?"

Anne said, "Look Darrel, I appreciate your concern. But this could be my chance to gain the town's respect. I help the toads, and the frogs won't call me a monster anymore. And they won't call you a monster either." Anne places her hands on Darrel's shoulders. "I don't want them to kick you down, because you're the nicest guy I've met. I can't let them do that to you. So, trust me, I can take care of myself."

Darrel smiled slightly with Anne's speech, and sighed in defeat. "Anne, whatever you do. Do not stoop to their level," he said. Anne nodded and left the house. Sprig however, felt like something was off. So he decided to follow the toads.

Sprig hops out the window, and Cronaxx turns to Tint, "Tint, I need you to follow Sprig. Make sure he doesn't get caught." Tint nodded, "You got it, Uncle." But before he could go further, Hop pop said, "Could you use the door, unlike Sprig?" Tint nodded and used the door.

Darrel eventually decided to sneak out of the house to find Anne. He spots Anne and the Toads walking out of One-Eyed Wally's house. He watched as the toads packed up Wally's stuff.

After the toads left, Darrel entered Wally's house, seeing Wally in the bathtub with a bag of beetle jerky. "Wally, you okay?" Darrel asked. "A bit better since Anne gave me back the beetle jerky," he replied. Darrel looked around his house and smiled. He waves his staff and said, "*erotser*," Wally's house was magically restored back to its old self.

"Thank you, Darrel," said Wally. "A good friend once told me it's better to give than to receive," said Darrel. "I didn't think you would be on the toad's list." "I didn't think so either," said Wally. "I may be a squalor, but I always pay my taxes." "Something's not right," said Darrel. He squints his eyes in the toad's direction and follows them to the next house.

As the day progresses, Darrel follows the toads, the toads ransack houses, Anne gives them their personal possessions, Darrel fixes their homes, and they move on to the next one.

Meanwhile, Sprig and Tint were spying on the Toads. Then, they come across Mayor Toadstool and Toadie carrying bags of coins in the other direction. They agreed to follow the Mayor instead to find out what's going on.

While the toads were in another house, Darrel snuck close to their wagon and found the mayor's list sitting on the seat. He realizes that their last stop is at Hop pop's farm. That's when he decided to run back to warn them.

Darrel raced back to the farm to find Cronaxx, Hop pop, and Polly eating. "Guys!" he cried. "Darrel? What's wrong?" Cronaxx asked. "I just discovered that we're next on the Toad's list," said Darrel. "They think we didn't pay our taxes."

Hop pop gasped, "That's ridiculous! I paid my taxes fair and square." "You don't have to tell me," said Cronaxx. "I witnessed it all." The clouds shortly cover up the sun, showing signs of a potential rainfall. Then, the group sees the Toads and Anne arrive on the farm.

"They're here!" Polly cried. "What do we do?" "We take a stand," said Hop pop. "We tell them that I have already paid my taxes." The toads get off their spider and approach the farm. "If we're going to tell them, it's now or never," said Darrel.

The four exit the house and confront the toads. "The taxes are due," said Bog. "You've got the wrong idea Bog," said Darrel. "Hop pop paid his taxes." "You can't come in here, and that's final," said Hop pop.

"I don't like your tone frog," said Bog. "Or did you forget who you're talking to?" "Bog, I'm telling you, he paid his taxes," said Anne. "He made me and Darrel watch." "And it was a beneficial lesson," said Darrel.

"They all say they paid!" Bog cried. "I don't care what you saw, the lists don't lie." "Well what about the Mayor?" Darrel asked. "He created that list, maybe he's lying." "Do you have any proof that the mayor lied to us?" Fens asked. Darrel looked down and spoke firmly, "No."

"Then, what should we start with?" Bog asked. He looks around to see what to claim and spots Bessie and Clipper. "What about those

things?" Fens asked. "You stay away from them!" Hop pop demanded. "I'll bite your face off!" Polly cried. Bog simply grinned, "Good choice, that snail and dragonfly should cover everything."

"Mayer, Fens, Anne, move out." The two toads proceed to claim Bessie and Clipper. But before they could, Darrel casted an orb of light in front of them. "Back off!" "Stop!" Anne cried. "Keep your claws off those animals. Better yet, get off our property!"

Rain began to pour from the sky tensing the situation. "Care to repeat that?" Bog asked. "With pleasure," said Darrel. "I said, 'Back away from my companion.'" "And I said, get lost. Now," said Anne. Their defiance against the toads got the frogs' attention.

Anne proceeds to remove her toad badge, "All I wanted was this town's respect. But just because they treated us crummy, doesn't mean I'm going to do the same to them." Darrel smiled and walked up to her side. "I don't care if they've broken the law, you can't treat people like this!" Anne slams her badge on the ground, thus making her case.

Bog snaps his fingers and Fens pushes her down. Mayer pins down Darrel and Bog grabs Hop pop and Polly, and says, "How disappointing, do you know what we do to traitors in the tower Anne?"

"I'm aware of what you do," said Cronaxx. He takes a stance and casts a wind spell at the toads. He blows them off of Anne and Darrel, and the two humans get up. Mayer takes Bog's hammer and prepares to hit Cronaxx. Darrel casts a shield surrounding his mentor. Anne draws her sword and tennis racket, and the two get in a battle stance.

Fens charges at the two, but has enough power to attack one. After Anne blocks her attack, Fens turns her focus to Darrel. The two go at it, with Darrel blocking her swings with her staff. "You'll never be able to hit me with that," Fens mocked. "Looking at you, I'd say you would never hurt a fly."

Fens pushes Darrel back, just as Bog disarms Anne's weapons. Then she turns and hits Anne's arm. Witnessing a group of bullies hurt Anne made Darrel flash back to the days when he was bullied. But this time, Darrel had to stand up to them on his own.

With his shocked expression turning into hatred, Darrel's staff glowed as bright as the sun. He casts a fireball at the toads, pushing them back. "Leave my friend alone!" he shouted. With another swing of his staff, he shot two lightning bolts at the toads.

Standing behind them were Sprig, Tint, and the citizens of Wartwood. All here to defend Anne from the toads. Outnumbered, the three toads surrendered, and Darrel's power diminished. He rushes over to Anne's side, "Anne! Are you okay?" Anne smiled, gripping her arm, "My arm's kind of busted, but I'll be fine."

Darrel takes her arm and his hands begin to glow. Before Anne knew it, her arm felt better. "Your arm should be better now," said Darrel. Anne hugs him in return, "Thanks Darrel." "So what took you two so long?" Darrel asked Sprig and Tint. "Sorry, we got caught up with a discovery," said Sprig.

Just then, Mayor Toadstool and Toadie appear from the bushes, out of breath. "Arrest that toad!" Sprig called out. "He stole the town's money, and was keeping it all for himself." The town gasped, and Darrel grew furious. "WHAT?!"

The town rushes to the mayor's tasteless statue where the toads break it. Revealing the town's money, exposing the Mayor's scheme. All of Wartwood, the toads, even Darrel, grew furious at the Mayor.

"My friend got hurt because of you!" Darrel growled. His staff began to glow again with flames and lightning. The mayor grew scared, "I needed the money for my campaign. Don't you know how much it costs to buy your love?" "I don't know, but how much would it cost to pummel you to the ground?" Darrel growled. "I know: PRICELESS!" Darrel shoots a fireball on Mayor Toadstool's behind making him run off with a smoking behind.

Later that day, the Toads returned all the citizens' stolen property back to them. "Well, if it was the respect you were looking for, you sure lost mine Anne," said Bog. "Your respect doesn't matter to us," said Darrel. "You both got a lot of nerve, I'll give you that. But, we'll be back," said Bog.

Bog gets on their spider and drives off back to Toad Tower. "Until then, we'll be ready," said Tint. "Indeed we shall," said Sprig. "But for now, those two have earned our respect!" Wally shouted. "Three cheers for Anne and Darrel, defenders of Wartwood!"

Darrel and Anne perked up at the sound of praise, "Thanks you guys," they said. "Now who wants to sign my cast, despite Darrel healing my arm?" Anne asked. "I'll sign first," replied Darrel. Darrel marks her cast with, 'BHFF -Darrel' "What does it say?" Anne asked. "Best Human Friend Forever." Darrel replied.

"Besides, you've got another best friend, and he's next," Darrel hands the pen over to Sprig. Soon after, the rest of Wartwood began signing Anne's cast.

Later that night, Darrel was wrapping up his journal entry for the day.

'Today was not like any other day. And that's coming from a guy who's stuck in a new world. We met some of the residents of Toad Tower who were vandalizing Wartwood all because of Mayor Toadspud's stupid greediness. Anne got hurt, and that made me stand up to bullies for the first time in my life. But it also made me feel like I was an entirely different person. I'll have to be careful with what comes out.'

'There's no doubt in my mind that the toads will return to Wartwood. And in greater numbers no less. Hopefully it won't be long until we can fight back. As for that Fens toad, she smelled oddly familiar. As if she was wearing the same expensive perfume I gave to Sasha on her birthday. If there's ever a chance that Sasha is with the toads, and if she's in trouble, me and Anne will do whatever it takes to save

her. Then we can work together, to hopefully find Marcy, and get back home.'

[Drawing of the Toad Badge]

Hop Pop and Lock

Chapter 16 - Hop Pop and Lock

After their encounter with the toads, Anne took it easy resting her arm. Darrel continued his magic training, and helped Hop pop with the farm. Tint kept watch on Darrel's training and tended to Clipper's needs from time to time. Sprig and Polly continued working on tending the fields. Hop pop and Cronaxx kept watch on the kids to make sure they work hard. Eventually, Anne's arm makes a miraculous recovery.

One day, the group prepares to leave the farm to sell more produce in Wartwood. Ever since they lost the stand, they had to find new ways to make money. They take their produce in a shifty wheelbarrow, and hide in an alleyway.

"This feels so shifty," said Darrel. "I know, isn't it exciting?" Sprig asked. "I suppose it is, since we're trying to sell vegetables," said Polly. "Now everyone," said Hop pop. "Just cause we lost the family stand doesn't mean we can't sell our produce out of a janky wheelbarrow."

"This is pretty sad," said Anne. "Agreed," nodded Polly. "Like I said," said Sprig as he put on a ski mask. "Excitement." Hop pop immediately removes it, "Take that off! This is perfectly legal." "So, why are we hiding in an alley?" Anne asked. "Stop asking questions and follow my lead," said Hop pop. "Salamanders, Darrel, you take the south side of the village. We'll handle things here."

Darrel and the salamanders prepare to sneak off and venture to the south side. But before they could, they turned to see a potential customer approaching the wheelbarrow. An old female frog picks up a weird looking gourd. Hop pop's skin sweats and turns tomato red. Darrel smiles, recognizing that feeling.

"Hey, Hop pop, who was that?" Darrel asked. "Uh, that was Silvia Sundew," replied Hop pop. "We met a long time ago until she moved out of the valley. But now she's back." "Given your emotional expressions, I can safely assume you're in love?" Darrel asked. "Well, maybe just a little," he replied.

"Aww, you should tell her how you feel," said Anne. "I wish I could," said Hop pop. "But you saw how I was back there. I have trouble even putting sentences together. I wish there was another way to let Sylvia know I feel."

Suddenly, Hop pop hears pounding outside the alley. He goes over to investigate, and leaves the group with the produce. Curious himself, Darrel peeks out to see the town gather around the message board.

He finds a poster on the messenger board stating that a Dance Fever is coming to Wartwood. Tint looks over his shoulder and smiles. "This is awesome," he said. "You like dances?" Darrel asked. "Not that, this is the perfect opportunity," replied Tint. "You could ask Anne to go with you."

Darrel perked up and blushed, "What? No, Tint, I can't." "Why not? I thought you liked her," said Tint. "I do, but I'm with Sasha. Even Anne knows that." "But you both don't know where she is," said Tint. "Even if we did, we have a code," said Darrel. "If I go behind Sasha's back, I'll be betraying her and ruining the girls' friendship. Besides she chose to be my girlfriend, and Anne and Marcy chose to respect it."

Suddenly, they hear a whistle and see that the cops are on their way. "Hop pop! The cops are coming!" Tint cried. "Everyone scatter!" Sprig shouted. The group split up, losing the cops.

Back at the Plantar farm, Darrel tends to Bessie, cleaning her shell. After completing his job, he looks at his photo of his friends. Darrel expresses a gloom look, 'I can't betray her trust. She made her choice,' he thought.

"What should I do Bessie?" Darrel asked. Bessie only chirped, and Darrel rolled his eyes. He exits the stable and sees Clipper land from his daily flight. "Hey buddy, I've got a predicament," said Darrel. "There's a dance tonight, and nights like these make me think about Sasha. Which makes me think about our time together. And makes me insane, because why am I talking to a dragonfly?"

Clipper claps his jaws in a sense he was laughing at his friend. "I wonder what Hop pop would think?" Darrel asked. He knocks on the door to Hop pop's study. "Don't come in," said Hop pop. "I'm in need of some study time."

With nowhere to go, Darrel returns to the basement. "Oh, hey Darrel," said Anne. Darrel suddenly perked up in surprise. "Oh, Anne. I didn't know you were still down here." "Where else would I go?" she asked. "Are you okay? You look glum."

"I'm okay, Anne," said Darrel. "I just got a lot of stress on my mind." "I know the feeling," said Anne. "Better yet, I know the cure," Anne takes out her phone and plays some music. "Just dance it off, you'll feel better."

Darrel shrugged and danced to the music as well. Darrel goes with the flow and dances like nothing else matters to him. Anne watched Darrel having fun dancing around and smiled. But then, Hop pop appears and surprises the two. Anne stops the music and asks what's going on. "I need your help, guys."

Hop pop shows them the dance flier he took from town square and explained his situation. "That's why I'm begging you two. Teach me your ways," he said. "I can't tell Silvia how I feel. But maybe I can show her, by dancing with her."

"Huh, didn't figure you for a hopeless romantic, Hop pop," said Anne. "Of course we'll help you," said Darrel. "Hey, uh think we could keep this between us?" Hop pop asked. "Sure, Hop pop. Our lips are sealed," said Anne.

Later that day, the rest of the group arrived where Darrel and Anne were prepared to train Hop pop how to dance. They cheered for Hop pop to prepare for the dance. Hop pop was disappointed knowing his secret went out the moment they found out.

"What happened to the zipped lips?" he asked. "Ask Anne that, she likes juicy gossip," said Darrel. "Besides when I'm done with you, you and Silvia will be locking lips by the end of the night," said Anne. This made the group, sans Hop pop and Cronaxx, groan in disgust.

Anne turned on her training montage music and the two prepared to give Hop pop dancing lectures. "The first lesson of dancing: Footwork," said Darrel. "Dancing always starts by moving to the music." Darrel tapped his foot and then bounced to the music. Hop pop did the same thing, only for him to roll in a fire anthill.

"Lesson 2 of dancing: Rhythm," said Darrel. "It's always important to stay in tune to the music. If you're in sync, the audience will be impressed. Especially Silvia." Darrel taps on a metal bucket with a hammer. Then gives it to Hop pop, for him to miss a swing and hit his foot.

"And the final lesson of dancing: Freestyle," said Darrel. "Freestyle is expressing yourself in your own unique way," said Anne. The kids show their freestyle skills to Hop pop and Cronaxx. Cronaxx sits out on dancing because of his age. But when Hop pop tried freestyle, he looked like a fish flopping out of water.

He finishes with a bird call, "Ta da!" With only a little breath, Hop pop stopped feeling impressed with himself. "I gotta say, that's the first lesson I actually felt go-" Anne grabs his cheeks and pulls him up to her face. "Hop pop, if you want to win over Silvia, NEVER DO FREESTYLE AGAIN!" she shouted. "Let's just focus on the two lessons," said Darrel.

Throughout the rest of the day, Darrel and Anne help Hop pop with his footwork and rhythm. Hop pop makes excellent progress even

does some dance moves on his own. The rest of the group applaud for his efforts.

"Nice work Hop pop," said Anne. "Or maybe I should call you 'Hip pop'." "That reference means nothing to me," said Hop pop. "Guys!" Sprig called out. "There's only ten minutes till the dance! Come On!" "Oh, we gotta go!" Anne shouted. Then the group dashes off to the dance.

At the dance floor, the Plantars arrive in formal attire. The salamanders were not far behind. Tint and Cronaxx were still in their daily outfits, but Darrel was wearing a black tux with a black tie. His hair is combed back and his twigs are gone.

He wraps his arms around his stomach. "I don't know what's going on guys," he said. "It's either watching Hop pop make a fool of himself or something worse is going to happen." "I think it's because you think Anne looks nice," said Tint. "Darrel, it's okay, just join the fun."

Darrel takes a deep breath and the three join the Plantars. Anne turns around and is stunned to see Darrel's attire. "Whoa, hey Darrel. You look nice," she said. "Oh, thanks Anne," said Darrel. "I- we- I mean- You look nice too." Anne smiled, "Thank you Darrel."

Darrel may be flustering his words, but he wasn't the only one. "There she is," said Hop pop. "I feel like I'm going to faint. Can frogs faint? I don't know anything anymore!" "Hop pop, calm down," said Anne. "You are the king of the dance floor. Now walk up to that lovely lady and ask her to dance."

Hop pop walks over to the dance floor where Silvia is standing. Unfortunately Hop pop's rival, Monroe, stepped in and asked Silvia to dance with him. Darrel watched to see if Hop pop would make his move. And he does, "I've been trained by the best and I'm going to take you down." "Is that so," said Monroe. "Then let's settle this."

"Come on, guys," said Darrel. "Hop pop's going to need our support." The group make their way to the edge of the dance floor. The group

and the frogs attending, surround the two frogs as they dance it out.

While Hop pop gave off a good start, Monroe happened to give off flashier moves. Unable to beat Monroe, Hop pop prepares to throw in the towel. However, Cronaxx came up with an idea. He whispers into Hop pop's ear.

"I don't know what to do," said Anne. "Monroe's just a better dancer." "That may be true Anne," said Darrel. "Then again, all that should matter is what Silvia thinks of Hop pop." "You're right Darrel," said Hop pop. "That's why I got to express myself in my own unique way."

Darrel was curious, "What does he mean-?" Suddenly, he realized something, "Oh no." "Is he going to?" Tint asked. "Indeed he is," Cronaxx replied. They prepare in horror for Hop pop to do his freestyle dance.

When Hop pop started freestyle, the group shielded their eyes. All they could hear were Hop pop's chants and monkey voices. When he finished his dance, the kids kept their eyes shut, not wanting to know if he's done.

Suddenly, Silvia comes on the dance floor and dances just like Hop pop. Everyone groans in disgust and the Mayor calls off the rest of the dance, "Pack it up, dance is over. Go Home!" Everyone, except the group and Silvia, stay on the dance floor.

"I don't get it," said Hop pop. "Why?" "I have a soft spot for the weird ones," replied Silvia. "That's why I suggested you dance freestyle," said Cronaxx. "Because she liked you for being you." The elders laugh it off.

"It's a shame the dance is over," said Hop pop. "I wish I could dance for hours with you." "Your wish is yours to keep," said Cronaxx. He snaps his fingers and Tint and Sprig play their instruments on cue. The two frogs smile, "May I have this dance, Silvia Sundew?" Hop pop asked. "Why, yes you may, Hopediah Plantar." Silvia replied.

(Right by your Side - Fish Hooks)

Swimming here in circles

Lost in thoughts of you

Picturing a moment

And wishing it were true

I thought that you were mine

But then you slipped away

And now I just want you to hear

These words I have to say

All I ever want to be

Is by your side

As the two dance the night away, Darrel looks over to Anne. He looks down at the photo of him and Sasha. Cronaxx looks to his friend and talks to him. "Darrel, you're not going to find happiness if you dwell on the past. You've come a long way in the past month. And that's coming from someone that's been around much longer than anyone else in this world. You say Sasha makes all the choices. But what choices will you make? Listen to your heart."

Darrel looks down on himself and recalls most of the events that have happened to him. He pulled an ancient staff from eternal slumber, He found his best friend in a strange new world, he trained a large dragonfly, he even tamed a pair of love doves with his soothing music to save his friends. If he could do those things without Sasha, he could do anything.

Caught up in the currents

*My heart is sinking fast
Dropping like an anchor
Broken like a glass
Sunlight streams through water
But fades to darkest blue
Cause now I'm left here wondering
Just how I'll make it through
When all I ever want to be
Is by your side*

He takes one last look at his photo with Sasha, then stuffs it in his pocket. He walks over to Anne, who was still resting on the cobblestone wall. "Hey Anne," said Darrel. "Oh, hey Darrel," said Anne.

Darrel rubs the back of his head and asks, "Um, you wanna dance? With me?" Anne was most surprised, "You mean it?" Darrel nodded, "Yeah, if you want to-" "Yes." Darrel was surprised by Anne's choice. "I mean, I'd thought you never ask." Darrel and Anne take each other's hands, and sway to the music.

*Swimming here in circles
Hold me, oh so tight
There's no place I'd rather be
Than in your arms tonight*

As Darrel and Anne continue to sway to the instruments, the two suddenly become lost in thought. They believed that nothing else

mattered this very moment. Darrel looks at Anne and smiles as big as he did in his photo with Sasha. Anne smiles back and leans her head to his shoulder. Both humans savored every second of their dance.

Let's leave the past behind

And dance beneath the stars

Then we'll laugh at why we took

So long to come this far

When all I ever want to be

Is by your side

Darrel and Anne take a moment to look at each other. Their eyes began to sparkle, and time suddenly slowed down. Eventually, the two snapped out of their moment and chuckled. "What a night," said Darrel. "Yeah, thanks for the dance anyway," said Anne. "You really made tonight special." Anne hugs Darrel and he returns it instantly.

Right by your side

At the end of the day, the Plantars returned home. The amphibians and Darrel were sound asleep. As for Anne, she was reading one of her books. 'That was an amazing dance, Darrel,' she thought. 'If things don't work out with Sasha, I'll be there for you.'

Encryptions, Inscriptions, & Depictions

Chapter 17 - Encryptions, Inscriptions, and Depictions

Darrel takes Clipper out for another delivery ride. Clipper zooms across Wartwood, as Darrel drops off jars of Plantar's potion to their customers. Despite losing the vegetable stand, the Plantars were still making good money, thanks to Darrel's delivery idea.

"Great haul today, bud," said Darrel. "Let's call it in early and catch some winds." Darrel and Clipper take to the skies. They do special stunts like barrel rolls, loop de loops. And when they catch the winds, they pick up speeds and fly higher in the sky. When they couldn't go higher, Darrel lets go of Clipper and falls with him. The two were free falling until they could see the ground. Darrel mounts back onto Clipper and the two fly back to the farm.

Back at the farm, Anne, the Plantars and the Salamanders were packing up on Bessie. Darrel comes back just in time. "Ah, Darrel. Glad you could join us," said Cronaxx. "We got good news boy," said Hop pop. "The mountain pass is scheduled to clear up in one week. Until then, we must venture someplace to get ready."

Hearing the news that he and Anne will be a step closer to finding their friends, made Darrel smile with excitement. "So where are we going?" he asked. "I'll show you," said Hop pop. "Just follow Bessie, and we'll be there before you know it."

Darrel takes Clipper and the group journey to a place Hop pop calls, the Archives. "The best way to start a quest," Hop pop began. "Is-" "Danger?" Sprig interrupted. "Weapons?" Polly asked. "Runes?" Tint asked. "Close Tint," said Hop pop. "It's Research."

The kids groan out of boredom, "More research? Are you sure?" Darrel asked. "Indeed," said Hop pop. "We'll never get you home if

we get bitten to death by a venomous snake fly. Or eaten by camouflage sogekings. Or crushed to death by a sand liger."

This made Darrel perk up, "Snake flies? Sogekings? Ligers?! There's so much I don't know about this world!" "I'm beginning to think you guys are obsessed," said Anne. "And that's why the Town of the Archives is the best place to know about the dangers of Amphibia," said Cronaxx.

The group arrives at the entrance and Darrel thinks of something familiar, "You know, the more I think about archives, the more I think that it's like a library from our home." "Hey, you're right," said Anne. "Zoobooks and Manga, here I come."

"Enough chattering you lot," said Hop pop as he opened the door. "Time to hit the books." The group dismount from their riding critters and make their way to the door. "Will there be a chance that we'll read about ancient runes Uncle Cronaxx?" Tint asked. "I believe so," he replied.

"Hey guys," said Sprig. "Instead of reading, wouldn't we be better off preparing by diving head first into dangerous situations?" "No," said Darrel and the Salamanders. "Why not, Darrel? Isn't research overrated" Anne asked. "Remember what happened the last few times we dove into danger?" Darrel rebuffed.

The group thinks back to a few events where they always freak out when they're in danger. Darrel protects Tint, Anne, and Sprig from a giant fire snorting star nosed mole. The group slides down a steep mountain while riding on Bessie. And finally, the time where they got pinned down by a giant skunk before...

With eyes as wide as plates, Darrel shuttered, "Now you understand?" "I can still smell the skunk juice," said Polly. "Okay," said Anne. "Research it is." Sprig was shocked, "What? You're siding with Hop pop, guys?" "Yes!" said Darrel and Tint. "This journey is going to take us beyond the valley Sprig," said Anne. "Who knows what will run into out there?"

The group venture down a spiral stairwell until they reach the bottom. The group, sans Hop pop and Cronaxx, gaze in amazement. "Take it all in," said Cronaxx. "Welcome to the Town of the Archives." The Archives looked like one of those old libraries from medieval times. "It's amazing," said Darrel.

"Sure, it seems cool," said Sprig. "Until you realize that all you do hear is read other people's cool adventures." "Okay enough pradle," said Hop pop. "We got to get a move on before we're locked in here."

Darrel was surprised, "Locked?" "Oh yeah," said Cronaxx. "The archive door is set on a sunlight timer." He points to a mechanical device with rotating gears and a glass monocle shining from the sun's ray. "It opens when the sun rises, and deadlocks when the sun sets."

"Alright, let's split up," said Tint. "Darrel, Anne, you take that tower over there. Polly, Uncle, take the tower next to the fireplace, Sprig and I will go over there." "And I'll go over to this tower, here." said Hop pop. The group splits up to find information about the world outside the valley.

Darrel and Anne sit in the archives reading books on what kind of plants and animals eat them. "Find anything interesting, Anne?" Darrel asked. "Only more ways of how various plants can kill you," replied Anne.

Sprig came up to them, hoping to liven up the ambiance of the archives. "Hey guys, watcha doin?" he asked in a weird voice. "Very funny Sprig," said Darrel. "Please let us read." He hands Sprig a book about snakes that eat amphibians. "See if you could find anything that helps us survive a tiger viper's bite."

Little after Sprig left, Tint finds books that involve ancient runes. "Yes!" he cried. "What is it, Tint?" Polly asked. "I found books on ancient runes," he replied. "That's swell, Tint," said Hop pop. "But

maybe you could keep the excitement to a minimum? Some of us want to focus on reading." Tint nodded, "Sure."

Later on, Hop pop reconvenes the group for lunch. "I'm actually glad you suggested this Hop pop," said Anne. "Me too," said Darrel. "I'm more prepared on how to deal with large feral insects than ever before. I'm ready to give them the cold shoulder." Darrel conjures an icy aura to go along with his catchphrase.

"Uh oh, guys?" said Tint. The group looks at him to see that the door is locked up. "How long have we been in here?!" cried Darrel. Hop pop looks up and gasps, "The lens is missing." "Who would trap us in here?" Anns asked. "Only one way to find out," said Darrel. "Everyone, empty your pockets, or any other special pouches you have. If anyone has the lens, we'll know who took it."

The group empty their pockets, leaving only Sprig keeping his hands in his. The group looked sternly at him. "Sprig, hand it over," said Tint. "What makes you think I- Yeah I have it," said Sprig. "But why should we read these moldy books? They're not going to prepare us for squat. What we need is a daring escape from an old underground library." "What we need is to safely get out of here without causing any problems," said Tint. "Now put that piece back," said Polly.

He reaches in his pocket and takes out the lens. Unfortunately as he shows it to the group, it slips out of his hand and shatters into a few pieces. "SPRIG!" Anne and Darrel cried. "What have you done?!" Polly screamed. "Don't worry, I can fix it," said Sprig.

He tries to gather all the pieces, only for him to sneeze and spread them out. "Now what are we going to do?" Tint asked. "Guess we wait here until someone visits the archives," said Hop pop. "And when was the last time someone came down here?" Anne asked. He took out the entry log and said, "Three years ago."

The group stares in shock, realizing that they could be trapped here forever. Anne and Polly bang on the door in hopes that anyone

outside could help them. But they were in the middle of nowhere, with only Bessie and Clipper outside.

The group tried to find several ways of getting out, only for them to fail immediately. They tried breaking down the door. They tried digging out, only for large worms to attack them. They even tried using Hop pop's spectacles to replace the lens. Only for the sun's beam to hit the books, setting them on fire.

The group sits in the middle of the archives, covered in soot. "
(Coughs) Okay, I'm out of ideas," said Tint. Polly groans, "Why did they have to put the door on a stupid sunlight timer?"

Suddenly, Anne gets another idea. "That's it! Light timer. Timer, sunlight, light, skylight!" She points to the skylight, making the group smile. "If we can get out through the skylight," said Cronaxx. "We're home free." "Anne, you're a genius," said Sprig.

"That's all well and good, but how are we going to get up there?" Hop pop asked. Darrel gestured to his staff as the answer, "Uh, duh?" Hop pop immediately realized what he meant. "Okay, so who should go first?"

Darrel conjures his staff, making it glow, and points to Anne. Anne suddenly lifts up and floats to the top. "Like my mom always said, 'Ladies First'," said Darrel. Anne reaches the top and her head gets through the skylight.

She calls Bessie and Clipper to get help, however they ignore her and turn the other way. "Good news guys, I can see the road from here. One of the amphibians can go get help," said Anne. The group cheered in excitement, "Who would've thought we could find a way to get out of here?" Tint asked.

"See guys?" Sprig asked. "How do you feel about diving in now?" Hop pop and Polly felt thrilled. However, When Anne tried to get back down, she couldn't. "Uh, guys? I'm stuck." "What?!" Darrel cried. "I'm seriously stuck! Do something!" Anne replied.

Darrel tried using his magic to pull her back in the archives. "Be careful Darrel," warned Cronaxx. "Trying to force a levitation spell on something that won't move will-" Suddenly, Darrel was yanked by his own power like a slingshot. He shot straight up to the skylight, dropped his staff, and made an impact to the roof, making a bigger hole. His impact squeezed him beside Anne, and the two humans were face to face.

They blushed like crazy, "Hey," said Darrel. "Guess pulling you out with magic didn't work." "What are we going to do now?" Anne asked. "The important thing is that you guys don't panic," said Tint. "We'll try to find another way out. We won't leave you hanging."

"Is that supposed to be a joke?" Darrel sternly asked. The two humans look back at each other, smiling shyly. Then, Darrel started chuckling. "What's so funny?" Anne asked.

"I was just remembering the last time I got stuck," replied Darrel. "I was about 5 years old and me and my family were vacationing in Paris. We visited many great landmarks, and ate many great cuisines. When we got to the Palace of Versailles, I couldn't see beyond the iron gate. So I squeezed my head to get a better look. When we were about to leave, my head couldn't get out. So my mom used ice cream on my ears to slip me back out."

Anne laughed, "Wow, what were you thinking?" "I wasn't thinking," replied Darrel. "My mind was processing the beauty of the palace. I was lost in its glory, I didn't pay attention to what I was doing." "We were toddlers at that time, Darrel. We all do crazy things," said Anne.

The two remain in silence for a while. And then, they hear a noise. "Hey guys, we're hearing a strange noise out here," said Anne. "What is that?" "Anne, Darrel, keep quiet and remain calm," said Tint. "The Cicadas are coming to graze."

Darrel and Anne look around to keep an eye out for cicadas. Darrel sees one behind Anne, revealing to be as big as Bessie. Darrel turns to Anne, "Anne, keep your eyes on me, and stay calm. They're right

behind you." Anne starts to freak out, but Darrel tries to keep her eyes on him.

Darrel looks around to see them grazing on the bushes, and comes up with a quick idea. "Anne, give me your hands," Anne just grips on Darrel, and he uses his magic to turn them into metal. The Cicadas turn away from their shiny look and continue grazing.

"Darrel, I'm scared," said Anne. "I know, I am too," said Darrel. "We tried doing things the right way, and now we might never get back home." "Wait a minute," said Sprig. "This place used to be someone's home. And if this was a home, there was a bathroom, and that means..." "Pipes that will lead us out of here," said Tint.

The amphibians look around the archives and find the blueprints to the building, Sprig and Tint find the bathroom and swim through the pipes to get to the other side. The two rescue Anne and Darrel from the surrounding cicadas and they fly off. Darrel removes the spell and the two revert to their old selves.

"Thanks guys, that was a close one," said Anne. "We're just glad you're okay," said Tint. Then, The rest came out from the archives looking wet. "So how did you guys get out?" Darrel asked. "Let's not talk about it Darrel," said Cronaxx. "I've seen things," said Hop pop.

"We dove into another adventure and escaped," cheered Sprig. "I told you it would work." "We were in this situation because of you Sprig!" Darrel shouted. "You pushed us. Why couldn't you see that?" Anne asked. "Listen, this trip out of the valley is more than that. It's our only chance to get home. We can't mess this up."

"I mean, do you want to run before you walk?" Darrel asked. "I want to walk, even if it means doing stuff we don't like." Sprig nodded, "Then that's what we'll do together. Sprig jumps to hug Anne's head, until the hole cracks open wider and the three fall in. "It's okay, we landed on books," said Anne. "I landed on books," said Darrel. "You landed on me." "Knowledge hurts," said Sprig.

Darrel grabs his staff and casts his levitation spell again. This time, he succeeds in getting all of them out of the hole. "Well, glad to know Sprig learned an important lesson on being prepared," said Cronaxx. "Let's go home."

Darrel whistles for Clipper, and he and the Salamanders fly back to the farm. As for Anne and the Plantars, they take Bessie back home. "So Tint, did you find any good runes in the archives?" Darrel asked. "You bet I did," Tint replied.

He takes out a scroll that shows a circle with symbols and a triangle in the middle. "Good thing I don't know what this stuff says," said Tint. "I can," said Cronaxx. "It's dark magic. So I think it's better to leave it alone." Darrel guides Clipper back to the archives and Tint dumps it back in the hole where Darrel, Anne, and Sprig fell through.

The group return to the farm, all tired and worn out. And in good timing too, considering that the sun was set. Inside the house, Darrel and Anne were sharing more stories of their vacations years ago. Sprig and Polly watched Tint perform light magic. Hop pop and Cronaxx were in the study preparing a map for the journey. 'I've got a feeling we'll be prepared for the journey,' thought Cronaxx. 'With attitudes like the ones Anne and Darrel have, who knows what we'll accomplish.'

Reeling 'em In

Chapter 18 - Reeling 'em In

Today, the Plantars are planning their annual fishing trip. Hop pop was gathering all the fishing equipment. Sprig was getting the bait, which happens to be worms larger than him. Polly and Anne were bringing along leisure equipment.

The salamanders were coming along, hoping to catch a break from magic training. Tint only packed his sun shades, and Cronaxx brought along a fun book to read. "It's nice for the Plantars to invite us Uncle Cronaxx," said Tint. "It sure is," said Cronaxx. "I'm just wondering how Darrel feels about this.

Down in the basement, Darrel was writing more entries in his journal:

'The past few days have been very strange. However, they're not all bad, some of the past events have been very exciting too.'

'For starters, Anne and I helped the town of Wartwood after all the amphibians instantly froze. We had to keep everyone safe from being eaten by predators. With all the townsfolk in solid ice blocks, it was easy to keep track. Before long, we both got bored and had fun with the townsfolk. We played bowling with them as the pins, we slid down hills using them as sleds. All that changed when Polly was snatched by a mother weasel who needed to feed her young.

'Then, me and Tint tried to stop Sprig from trying to make Mrs. Croaker like him. He even tried to reunite her with what could've been her lost love. Instead, it was her mortal enemy. We were able to help him understand that not everyone is supposed to like him.

After we viewed the mountain pass, we almost got eaten by a family of horned bullfrogs in their inn. Thanks to Polly and Tint, we are able

to see another day. Maybe Hop pop will give Polly more freedom, despite her size.

Then, me and Anne saw a strange moss creature that not even the people of Wartwood would believe. So to get people to believe, we asked Wally to come with us. Because he claimed that he saw it on one of his travels. So we journeyed on to find the mysterious Moss man, only to come short with evidence. And the fact that One Eyed Wally admitted he made it up. But it didn't matter, because in the end we know what we saw and that's okay.'

[The next few pages were drawings of the Moss man, the Horned Bullfrogs, Mrs. Croaker's old enemy, and the weasel and its family that almost ate Polly.]

'Today I can finally catch a break. But I'm not so sure if I'm ready yet. Hop pop invited us on the Plantar family fishing trip. To get out of magic training, I said yes. Sprig told me of how he enjoyed fishing with Hop pop when he was a pollywog. I almost choked up in front of him, luckily he didn't notice when I bolted.'

'No one, not even my human friends, know that the idea of fishing on boats brings back emotional memories of my family. Especially my gra-'

Darrel couldn't finish his entry, instead he plopped a few tears on his page and pulled out a photo of an old man from his phone. The old man was seen in family photos, some are even with him in planes and boats. Darrel was a kid, and he looked so happy with him. Turns out that the old man was his grandfather.

Darrel thought back to the memories of the two of them fishing, riding in boats, and parasailing as well. After viewing the photos, he pulls up a song and listens to it. Darrel closes his eyes and thinks back to his pleasant memories.

After going through a bit of the song, Anne bursts in, surprising Darrel. "Hey Darrel, we're about ready to go," she said. Darrel didn't

want to show Anne his tears so he wiped them off quickly. "Already? Man, time does sure fly. Let's go," he said. He bolts past Anne until she asks him, "Are you okay? Why'd you wipe your face?" Darrel replied, "I thought a bug just landed on my face." The two leave the basement and get on the boat.

Darrel looks back to the dock to see Silvia Sundew look like she came from a country club. "Hey Silvia, how's it going?" Darrel asked. "It's going great," Silvia replied. "Considering Hopediah invited me on this boat trip."

Sprig looked a tad nervous, because he was looking forward to spending time with Hop pop. "Oh, hey Silvia. Has anyone seen Hop pop?" Just then, Hop pop walks out, making a dynamic entrance. He is dressed like a regatta sailor, hands in pockets, and said, "Morning kids, ready for the fresco open water?"

"Dang HP, lookin' good," said Anne. "Isn't he dreamy?" Silvia asked. "Come on, my dear. I'll show you around the boat," said Hop pop. He takes Silvia by the arm and escorts her to the boat. "Looks like Hop pop is fishing for something else," said Anne. "Gross Anne," said Polly.

Sprig scoffed, "This doesn't change a thing. He and I are going to spend the day together, and have our special time." What he didn't know was that Darrel listened to his statement, and made him recall his memories.

"Anchors away!" Hop pop called. The gang cast off from the farm and into the creek. Only for them to forget that they're still tied to the dock. Luckily, Darrel used his magic to untie the boat. "To the sea!" Hop pop called.

The group journey forth down the river, with Hopediah and Silvia steering the ship together. Darrel wanted to help Sprig by getting the bait tenderized. But Sprig politely refused. "It's okay Darrel, I want to do this with Hop pop, whenever he's ready." Then, one of the worms hit Sprig, pushing him down.

Darrel nodded, understanding his motive. He goes to the edge and looks to the view. "Enjoying the scenery?" Cronaxx asked. He walks up to Darrel's side and rests his head on his arm. "I sure am," replied Darrel. "It surely brings back memories from home." "Are they pleasant?" Cronaxx asked. "They're more than pleasant," said Darrel. "They're one of a kind."

"Hey Darrel!" Anne called out. Darrel turned around to see Anne with a parasail and Polly in her bucket. "Come on! Come parasailing with us!" Darrel looked uneasy, seeing Anne with a parasail. "Are you okay?" Cronaxx asked. "I'm fine," replied Darrel. "I just have a normal fear of parasailing. Anything can go wrong if not done properly."

Darrel walked over to the girls, but Cronaxx knew he was lying. "Parasailing is easy," said Anne. "The wind does all the work." "Where'd you learn all this again?" Polly asked. "Hours and hours of extensive research," replied Anne. Darrel grinned, "Extensive research? Watching videos of other people doing it doesn't count."

Anne laughed, "Just watch me. I'll prove my mom wrong." She takes the sail and starts flailing around in the sky. Watching Anne made Darrel smile, but then the song he was listening to came into his head. Suddenly, he started seeing his grandfather in Anne's place.

Before he could get anymore emotional, he dashed his way to the lower decks of the ship. All alone, he let out his emotions. Sobbing like crazy, he looks back at his photos of his grandfather. "I miss you so much," he whispered. It was clear that his grandfather really meant a lot to him.

Tint and Anne followed him below deck after they saw him run off. "Darrel? Are you down here?" Tint asked. "Where are you?" Anne called. Hearing his friends call to him, Darrel gave his location. "I'm over here."

Tint and Anne find him sitting by a few crates. "You took off like crazy," said Anne. "Are you okay?" Darrel looked up to Anne with

bloodshot eyes. Knowing the truth was out, he decided to tell them.

"I'm just really emotional about this trip, I thought I could handle it. But there are some things I just can't keep to myself." "Like what?" Tint asked. "Sprig and Hop pop's activities are the same things I used to do with my grandfather," said Darrel.

"Your grandfather?" Anne asked. "Yes," said Darrel. "We used to do the same things when the whole family goes on vacation for the summer. We used to go fishing, to the shores, even go whale watching, and parasailing in the water. My grandfather and I were the best of friends."

"He sounds like a swell guy," said Tint. "Was," was all Darrel said. Anne and Tint were surprised. "A couple years ago, Pop didn't feel up to going on the family trip. Then, my parents get a call from my grandmother telling us to come. I didn't know what to expect, but my gut had a bad feeling about this."

Anne and Tint continued to listen, "So we went to our grandparents place, and I saw pop. He was lying in a mobile hospital bed, in his usual spot, and he looked really weak. I saw the sadness in my grandmother's eyes, along with my parents. We all stayed together watching his favorite movie, Top Hat. And before I went to sleep, I did one last great thing for him. I stayed by his side. I held his hand, and I said 'goodbye'."

Tint and Anne were in tears hearing his story, "Ever since then, we stopped going to the shore. I felt I couldn't go back on a boat or parasail again after that. Until today." "So that's why you were quiet on us back home," said Anne. "Why didn't you tell us?" "I just couldn't bring myself to tell you," said Darrel. "I couldn't tell Sasha, but she kept bugging me. I had to ask my parents to stop her from pestering me."

Anne took a knee in front of Darrel, "It's okay that you miss him. That means you really care about your family. I'm so sorry you lost your grandfather. But I promise you I'm here for you if ever you need me."

Darrel looks up at his best friend, "We'll both be there for you," said Tint. Darrel looks back down, and then hugs his friends. "I'm the luckiest boy alive," he said. Anne and Tint returned their hug and sat with him for a moment.

Darrel wipes his face and says, "Alright guys, I think I'm ready to go topside." "That's the spirit," said Tint. "If you ever need a break, we'll be there for you," said Anne. Darrel nods and the three return above deck.

"So, your grandfather loved this Top Hat?" Tint asked. "He sure did," said Darrel. "When we watched it together, we used to sing our favorite song together." "What song?" Anne asked. "I'll tell you when we get back," replied Darrel.

For the rest of the day, the group continued their fishing trip. Anne continued to fail at parasailing, while Hop pop and Silvia were fishing. Cronaxx manned the helm, while Darrel, Tint, and Polly were watching Anne in amusement.

But for Sprig, he grew jealous of Silvia taking up his time with Hop pop. So he decided to sabotage the trip by making Silvia go away. But every attempt he made seemed to backfire on him.

Later on, Sprig was on the edge of the ship feeling down. Darrel decided to try and cheer him up. "Hey, what's wrong Sprig?" he asked. "This was supposed to be me and Hop pop's time together. Ever since Silvia came along, we didn't even fish once. All Hop pop ever does is spend time with her, and it's making me feel hurt."

Darrel looked to Hop pop and Silvia, who fortunately heard everything. So Darrel decided to do the right thing. "Would it make you feel better if I talked to them?" Darrel asked. Sprig nodded sadly, "Sure, knock yourself out."

Darrel gets up and runs into Silvia first. "Hey Silvia," "Oh, hello Darrel." "I need to talk to you and Hop pop." Silvia raises her hand, "Say no more, Darrel. I saw you two talking and I want to help."

Darrel smiled, "Then let's go give Sprig what he was looking forward to," said Darrel.

Darrel and Silvia find Hop pop taking a small breather. "Oh Hopediah," called Silvia. "Hey Silvia. Hello Darrel. What's up?" said Hop pop. "Well, Darrel and I were discussing that you should spend some time with Sprig," said Silvia. "Sprig told me how you've been spending more time with Silvia. He's really sad, and wants to fish with his grandfather."

Hop pop looks to Silvia, and nods letting him know it's okay. "You two are right," said Hop pop. "I'll go get my fishing gear and you guys get Sprig." Just as Darrel was about to get to Sprig, he watched Anne getting hit by bugs on the parasail.

He takes his staff and brings Anne back down with a gravitational spell. "Looks like the spider caught himself a fly," he said jokingly. Anne laughed at his joke, "Thanks, Darrel. But I was so close." "You'll get there," said Darrel. "It's not easy without a professional."

Then, out of nowhere, they hear Silvia screaming. "What was that?" Polly asked. "That sounded like Silvia," replied Tint. Darrel scouted the waters until Hop pop and Sprig rushed on deck. "Cronaxx, turn this ship around!" Hop pop called. "Aye aye, captain," replied Cronaxx.

He turns the wheel, giving the ship a sharp turn. Sprig takes Anne's parasail and glides like a professional to get a bird's eye view. "How is he doing that?" Anne asked. "Sheer luck, Anne. Sheer luck," replied Darrel.

When the group gets closer, they find Silvia on a remote island. But then the island reveals itself to be a giant crab. The crab attacks the ship, damaging the bow in the process. "This crab is making me very scared," said Anne.

"Maybe," said Darrel. He takes the Eternal staff in hand. The gemstone glows, and winds flow through his makeshift cape. "But

that crab is making me hungry." Darrel casts some winds to guide Sprig to Silvia. She catches his hand, and the two make their escape.

"Full astern, Cronaxx!" Hop pop cried out. "Aye aye, Captain," said Cronaxx. He puts the ship on full reverse as the crab gives chase. Darrel brings the two flying amphibians back to the ship and then creates a tidal wave knocking the giant crustacean on its back.

"Thank goodness you're safe Silvia," said Hop pop. "But, what were you doing on that crab?" "I went offshore to get you these," Silvia takes out a pile of blue flowers. "Your favorite flowers." Hop pop was stunned, "My favorite flowers are daffodils."

Silvia then looked at Sprig in a sternly way. Sprig chuckled until Tint spoke up. "Sprig, what did you do?" Sprig groaned, "I have a confession to make. Silvia, the reason you were on that crab and almost became a snack was because I'm a selfish petty child who wanted his Hop pop all to himself."

"Oh, now he admits it," said Polly. "You're a cool lady," Sprig said to Silvia. "And Hop pop's lucky to have you. We all are." Sprig takes one of the flowers and puts it on the side of her head. She smiles, and declares to continue fishing with the group. Darrel and Anne suggest going back for the crab considering how much meat it holds. But the group was silent.

Darrel shrugged, "Your loss." Darrel takes Anne's parasail and flies his way back, using the staff as his engine. He finds the crab struggling and he swings his staff to take down his delicious enemy.

Back at the Plantar house, the gang feed off the crab that Darrel took down. But, Anne and Darrel were going nuts having most of the meat on their plates. "Biggest crab we've ever caught," said Anne. "Despite not catching any fish, my grandfather and I don't leave the boat empty handed," said Darrel. "This wasn't my first crab I caught. But it certainly was the biggest in my book."

At the end of the day, the group say goodbye to Silvia and prepare to settle in for the night. Darrel and Anne were ready to settle in their bunks. "You know, despite a rough start, I actually had fun fishing with you guys," said Darrel. "I'm sure your grandfather would be proud of you." Cronaxx said, poking his head out the basement door. "Never forget: So long as the memory of certain loved ones lives in ones heart, one shall say that life is good."

As Cronaxx left for bed, Anne had one last question to ask. "So Darrel, what was you and your grandfather's favorite song from that movie you guys used to watch?" Darrel smiled, "It was the song that he and my grandmother danced to on their first date. Cheek to Cheek." Darrel takes out his staff and plays a musical aura as he begins to sing.

(*Cheek to Cheek - Top Hat*)

Heaven... I'm in heaven,

And my heart beats so that I can hardly speak.

And I seem to find the happiness I seek,

When we're out together dancing cheek to cheek.

Heaven... I'm in heaven,

And the cares that hung around me through the week,

Seem to vanish like a gambler's lucky streak,

When we're out together dancing cheek to cheek.

Oh, I love to climb a mountain,

And to reach the highest peak.

But it doesn't thrill me half as much

As dancing cheek to cheek.

Oh, I love to go out fishing

In a river or a creek.

But I don't enjoy it half as much

As dancing cheek to cheek.

Dance with me! I want my arms about you.

The charms about you

Will carry me through to...

Heaven... I'm in heaven,

And my heart beats so that I can hardly speak.

And I seem to find the happiness I seek,

When we're out together dancing cheek to cheek.

Before long, Darrel was dancing to the instrumental half of the music. Closing his eyes, he could feel that his grandfather is dancing in his shoes right now. He envisions his grandfather synchronizing to the dance moves along with his grandmother.

As the vision comes to an end, Darrel finds himself back in the Plantar basement. He yawns, telling Anne goodnight. "That was so beautiful," she said. "Why can't all men be like you?" "Because there's no one else like me," Darrel replied. "Ain't that the truth," said Anne. The two fall asleep, but not before Darrel thinks of one last thing. 'I should do something nice for Anne.'

Devine Date (maybe)

Chapter 19 - Devine Date (maybe)

Darrel Loyalität is a shy, kind teenager with a popular girlfriend. He gets into a life changing situation when Anne accidentally sends him and her friends into the world of Amphibia. Now thanks to his experiences in the new world, he has developed into a strong, independent wizard-in-training.

It was thanks to Anne, the Salamanders, and the Plantars that helped him make it this far. But most of the thanks goes to the Salamanders, who helped him become more independent with himself. His magical powers have also become stronger over time, giving him more abilities to handle. But, the one friend that helped him get through most of the rough times in his life was Anne.

One day, while plowing the fields, Darrel looks to see Anne working on cleaning Bessie's shell. Darrel smiled at her hard work, seeing how much she's grown in Amphibia as well. He recalls the days she helped him work off his debt in her family's restaurant, to all the close calls they have shared together.

Looking back on everything she's done, Darrel wanted to do something nice for her. As he finishes up plowing the crops, he goes to Cronaxx in Hop pop's study. Before he enters, he hears the sound of him and Hop pop talking. It was a bit muffled, considering that the door is closed. But that didn't stop him from trying to listen.

He takes a glass cup and places it on the door. "I'm telling you we need to tell them," said Cronaxx. "We can't, now is not the time," said Hop pop. "If you don't tell them, and they find out from someone else, there's going to be a lack of trust," said Cronaxx. "The more people know about this, the better of preventing this happening again."

On the other side of the door, Darrel stopped listening and thought to himself, 'What are they talking about that's too dangerous for us to know?' Darrel decided to let their little conversation go, and place the glass back where he found it.

He goes back to knock on the door, "Hop pop, Cronaxx?" The two elders jump, hoping that Darrel didn't hear anything. "This conversation never happened," whispered Hop pop. Cronaxx just glared at the farmer, "You can't keep this from them forever."

Hop pop opens the door and sees Darrel. "Oh hey Darrel, what's up?" "I need your help," replied Darrel. "Can you guys get Tint, Sprig, and Polly in here?" Cronaxx smiled, "Of course, Darrel. Anything you need, we're here for you."

Cronaxx asks Tint to come down, and Hop pop calls his grandkids into the house. "What is it, Darrel?" Tint asked. "Guys," said Darrel. "Anne has done so much for me ever since we first met. Whenever I needed help, aside from you guys, she was there. I want to do something special for her as a thank you."

Polly grinned, "Oh I see, you want to go on a date with her." Darrel grew nervous, "What?! No, it's not a date. It's just a special evening, the two of us, spending time together." "But what about this Sasha character?" Sprig asked. "Isn't she your girlfriend?"

Darrel nodded, "She is, but there is a difference between a date and hanging out. I simply just want to hang out with Anne." Cronaxx smiled, "And how does this involve us?" "I need your help in making this night the best you can make it." "Depends on what you're planning," said Hop pop.

Darrel takes his staff and makes a smoking illusion. "First, I plan to take Anne on a flight with Clipper. The aurora borealis is about to be as bright as can be, one could actually see animal spirits walk among the lights. After the flight, we're gonna go to the lake where the fireflies were the last few weeks. And finally, I thought we could have dinner overlooking the horizon of Wartwood."

The amphibians were impressed with what Darrel had planned. "How can you not call this a date?" Polly asked. "So If you got this planned, why do you need our help?" Sprig asked. "I need you guys to set up the table at this location," replied Darrel. "And Hop pop, I need you to cook this."

Darrel takes out a recipe card with ingredients and instructions on how to make it. Hop pop read carefully and smiled. "Consider it done Darrel," he said. "And consider this as a thank you for all your help around the farm." Darrel smiled and hugged his amphibious friends. "Thank you guys so much."

"So, when do we start?" Tint asked. "As soon as we take to the skies," replied Darrel. "Good," said Cronaxx. "So how are you going to ask her?" "I'm going to try and ask her an hour past noon," replied Darrel.

Later that day, Darrel finished planting new seeds for the crops. He looks to the sun, seeing as it's past noon. He looks to Tint and Cronaxx who nod at his choice. Darrel smiles and makes his way to Anne who is working on stacking hay for Clipper and Bessie.

Darrel cleared his throat, "Ahem. Hey, Anne." Anne turns her head to Darrel's attention. "Oh, hey Darrel. What's up?" Darrel took a deep breath, "I was thinking, since we're almost done with our chores. Would you like to spend the evening with me? You know, just the two of us?"

Anne was so shocked that she started blushing lightly on her cheeks. "Wait. You and me? As in without the Plantars or the Salamanders?" Darrel nodded, "Yeah, if you want to. It wouldn't be a date, it's just two humans hanging out." As much as Darrel didn't want it to be a date, he really wanted to spend time with Anne.

Anne accepted, "Sure, what are we doing?" Darrel perked up, "There's going to be an aurora borealis tonight. It'll be so bright, you could possibly see animal spirits, even the ones that were extinct. Then, I thought we could go to the lake and watch the fireflies glow

before they migrate away. And finally, we could have dinner while looking over the horizon of the valley."

Anne smiled, "That sounds fascinating. Should I get ready?" Darrel smiled back, "Be ready by sunset, okay?" "Sure," replied Anne. The two turn from each other and express a silent cheer. "Yes!" They whispered.

Later in the day, Darrel got himself prepared for the evening. He combed his hair, despite his twigs still poking out. He made sure he didn't have any dirt marks on his daily clothes. He got Clipper a small saddle to make him, Darrel and Anne comfortable enough for the ride.

He spots Anne waving hello, signaling that she's ready. "Hey Darrel, I'm ready." Darrel climbs up on Clipper and offers his hand, "Then let's roll." Anne takes his hand and the two fly up to the sky.

Anne holds tight around Darrel, eyes closed, as Clipper reaches high as he could carry two humans. As they reached Clipper's peak, the sun set and the aurora borealis appeared. "You can open your eyes now, Anne," said Darrel.

Anne opens her eyes to see the aurora. The two humans were filled with amazement seeing their natural light show without special effects. "It's amazing," said Anne. Suddenly, the two see an illusion of an eagle flying above them. Then, more animals began to walk, march, or fly past them. Some of the animals shown are even extinct.

"I did not expect to see mammoths and sabertooths," said Darrel. He taps Clipper with his heels and the dragonfly flies in pace with the animals. Darrel and Anne gaze in wonder until the lights fade away. "Thanks Darrel, that was amazing," said Anne. "This is just the beginning," said Darrel.

Darrel drives Clipper back to the watering hole and flies off as the two get off him. "Is he coming back?" Anne asked. "We're close

enough to the farm, I think we'll be okay," replied Darrel.

The two sit at the lake and gaze in the water's reflection of the red moon. The fireflies begin to fly in the dark, glowing beautifully. "Okay, Darrel. What's the idea? Why are you taking me to all these wonderful light shows?" Anne asked.

"Because I thought we could take a moment to appreciate our surroundings," replied Darrel. "Think about it, we're stuck in the middle of a strange new world. We spent all of our time struggling to find our friends and get back home, so that we don't take a chance to stop and notice the beauties of this world."

Anne smiles at the lake, "How did you get so wise?" "I have a very good teacher," said Darrel. The two were busy staring down at the lake, that they didn't notice that their hands were touching.

Shortly after, Anne and Darrel's stomachs start to growl. "You thinking what I'm thinking?" Darrel asked. "Let's get some food," said Anne. Darrel stands up and offers his hand, "Come on, I know a place." Anne takes his hand and follows him out of the wilderness.

Up on the hill overlooking the valley of Wartwood, the two see a dinner table like the one at Stumpy's place. "Woah, did you make all this?" Anne asked. "I had a little help," replied Darrel.

The two sit down, then look at the horizon across the valley. "Take a good long look, Anne," said Darrel. "Because this valley is just the beginning of this grand adventure we're about to endure. You, me, the salamanders, the Plantars, and eventually Sasha and Marcy."

Suddenly, Cronaxx and Hop pop came out and served them a plate of Anne's traditional Thai noodle recipe, now with crickets and larvae. "Enjoy, you two," said Hop pop. "Funny, I thought they were going to sit down and join us," said Anne. "Ah, I'm sure they won't bother us," said Darrel.

Then, Tint and Sprig pop up out of nowhere and play their instruments. Recognizing the melody, Anne concluded that it was Darrel's favorite folk song. "Is this your favorite song from that fantasy movie Marcy showed us?" Darrel nodded, "It sure is. And it truly annoyed Sasha the way Marcy sang it."

(Blunt the Knives - Marcy's version)

(Darrel)

Blunt the knives, bend the forks

Smash the bottles and burn the corks

Chip the glasses and crack the plates

That's what Sasha Waybright hates!

(Anne)

Cut the cloth, tread on the fat

Leave the bones on the bedroom mat

Pour the milk on the pantry floor

Splash the wine on every door!

(Darrel & Anne)

Dump the crocks in a boiling bowls

Pound them up with a thumping pole

When you're finished if they are whole

Send them down the hall to roll

That's what Sasha Waybright hates!

The two laughed after finishing their song. Darrel and Anne, arm in arm, look at each other realizing how close they are. They let go, blushing like crazy, remaining silent for a few minutes. "I know we're going to find them," said Anne. "You don't have to keep reminding me." "I know," said Darrel.

"So what did you think of tonight? Did you have fun?" Anne nodded, "Of course I did. It's always fun with you around. Your ideas of fun today were more exquisite." "What can I say, I have specific taste," said Darrel. "But, I had fun too Anne. We should do this again sometime." Anne nodded, "Absolutely."

Darrel's grin suddenly changed into a small frown. "Can I tell you something?" "Sure, what is it?" Anne asked. "Honestly, I had more fun with you in less than a month, than I had with Sasha in almost a year," said Darrel. "My idea of fun was way better than the last time Sasha took us out to have fun."

Anne was concerned about Darrel, "Oh come on, Sasha was trying-" "To look after us?" Darrel finished. "Like she did when she abandoned me in your restaurant? Or how about the time that she didn't like the gift I made for her on her 13th birthday? I had to waste a fortune to get back on her good side. Let's face it, I think Sasha is just looking after herself. I want to believe otherwise, but I have my doubts."

Darrel's behavior started making his hands glow a faint red. Seeing his hands, made Anne worry. Storm clouds began to condense the area, making the amphibians grow anxious. Winds began to blow variously across the hilltop. "Oh no," said Cronaxx.

In the center of the storm, Darrel looks down at his hands. "Why am I still with her?" Darrel asked himself. "Because you still see the good that's in Sasha," said Anne. "You know better than to turn someone away because you're a kind person."

Anne takes Darrel's hand and he calms down, breaking up the storm in the process. "Anyone would be lucky to have someone like you,"

said Anne. Darrel looked up and smiled at Anne. "I plead guilty. You're one of the best human friends I could have in this world."

"Why can't more people be like us?" Darrel asked. "For what it's worth, you hold a special place in all of our hearts," said Tint. "We each wish we could be a little more like others." "Sometimes, the best in you brings out the best in everyone else," said Cronaxx. "Even at times when you need to snap."

Darrel smiles at his friends who surround the table and says, "Thanks you guys." "Okay everyone," said Hop pop. "It's getting late and we have another long day of hard work ahead of us." The group grabs all the dining supplies and takes them back to the farm.

Back in the basement, Darrel and Anne were getting ready to turn in. "Thanks for taking me out today, Darrel," said Anne. "I had a wonderful time." Darrel nodded, "So did I, Anne. I think we deserved the night off." Anne takes out her phone and smiles. "Get in here. Special selfie."

Darrel smiles and gets in view of Anne's phone. "Smile Anne," he said. Anne takes the photo and initials it HBFF. As in Human Best Friend Forever. Anne looks down on the photo, and Darrel says, "Best photo I've seen all day." "Me too," said Anne. Anne and Darrel hugged again, a bit longer than they usually do, and soon turned in for the night.

Meanwhile, in Hop pop's study, Cronaxx was pacing back and forth. Hop pop sat at his desk. "Hop pop, for the last time. We have to tell them about the box," said Cronaxx. "I told you, not now," said Hop pop. "Darrel conjured up that storm, and he didn't realize that it came from him when he got upset!" Cronaxx said in an anxious tone.

"The power of the Eternal Staff comes from the wielders' emotions," Cronaxx explained. "Who knows what kind of damage Darrel can do when he's emotionally unstable. If he finds out you've been hiding the truth, he could destroy your farm, or worse. I'm not lying, if you won't tell him, I will."

Hop pop tried to keep his ground, "I told you if he does anything to the farm, it's your responsibility." "And that's why I'm giving you until the end of the month to tell them the truth," said Cronaxx. "Otherwise, I'm telling Darrel and Tint what I know."

Hop pop widened his eyes at the situation he's in. Cronaxx, a Salamander wizard, and guest in the Plantar house, gave him an ultimatum. Hop pop knew there would be no denying who he's dealing with. In defeat, he silently nodded as he exited the study.

Cronaxx sighed, "I'm sorry Hopediah, but I know as well as any other wizard that the Eternal Staff is the most powerful tool a wizard could ever witness. And in the wrong hands, or emotions, it could lead to disaster." Cronaxx blows out a candle, with smoke taking the form of a hand shooting out smoke.

That's it for this chapter. I hope everyone is just as excited for the second half of Amphibia as I am. A lot of emotions are riding in this series, especially after watching the trailer. I can't wait to know what happens next. Until then, stay tuned.

Academy of Combat

Chapter 20 - Academy of Combat

One day, in Amphibia, Hop pop was taking the kids to another part of town. "I still can't believe you're bringing us to a daycare Hop pop," said Sprig. Anne, Sprig, and Polly looked agitated while Darrel and Tint looked confused. "Look, I'm sorry okay," said Hop pop. "But I have to go to the annual Crop Convention. It's a long ways away, I'll need Cronaxx's help, and I can't leave you kids on the farm alone for the weekend."

The kids, besides Darrel and Tint groan. "Are you sure about this Hop pop?" Darrel asked. "Absolutely," he replied. "You kids need supervision. Why sometimes, it feels like we have two wacky adventures a week." Darrel and Tint look at each other with shock. Then, look at the invisible viewing audience. "He's not wrong about that," Darrel said.

The group reach their location, a lonely spiral tower with a blue flag waving on top. "Here we are," said Hop pop. Then a figure comes out from the door. He is shown as a salamander wearing an old school instructor's outfit. "Greetings, I am Tritonio Espada. The instructor of this daycare."

"Huh, I thought Briar and Iris Bogwater ran this place," said Hop pop. "The Bogwaters retired last year and sold their business to me," said Tritonio. "Well in that case, I am Hopediah Plantar," he greeted. "This here is Sprig, Polly, Tint, Anne, and Darrel. These two may be gigantic, but they're also children." "Hey!" Anne complained. Darrel rolled his eyes and shrugged it off.

"Ah, yes," said Tritonio. "I shall educate them. Teach them true discipline." Hop pop was most pleased with his determination. "Oh, I like the cut of your jib, Mr. 'Treytony'. Did I say that right?" "Certainly not," replied Tritonio.

Behind Bessie's shell, the kids grouped together. "So what do you guys think?" Tint asked. "Well, it's not so bad I guess," said Sprig. "There is a cool tower." "I'm still a little edgy about this ordeal. But I'll give it a chance," said Darrel. "You guys don't get it," said Anne. "Tritonio's a teacher, and any of all that is good."

"What's so bad about teacher's Anne?" Tint asked. "Let's just say, me and them don't mix," replied Anne. "Teachers, they just don't like me. Probably because of my carefree spirit." Darrel sighed, "Anne just doesn't realize what she's talking about. She thinks that teachers back home are giving her a hard time. But in reality, she doesn't pay attention to them, which gives our teachers a hard time."

"Welp, kids," said Hop pop. "Looks like you're in good hands here with Mr. Tritonio. Crop Con, here I come." Hop pop takes Bessie and rides off. "You sure Cronaxx wanted you to keep your staff at home?" Anne asked. "He said that today's lesson relies on more than just magic, so I had to leave it behind," replied Darrel.

Tritonio watches the elder frog until he is out of his sight and then turns to the kids. "Finally, it is just us now," he said. "So let us cast aside this illusion, yes?" He tears off the instructor's outfit revealing a French type outfit. "Woah," said the kids. "And this is no mere daycare," said Tritonio as he kicked a nearby sign. "This is a combat crash course, for kids."

Sprig and Polly were excited about the change of venue of where they're staying for the weekend. Darrel and Tint smiled, realizing what Cronaxx meant. "Adults, they shelter their children, I say 'no, teach them to fight.' For danger lurks around every corner in Amphibia. Stay on your toes, trust no one."

"Ahh! Look over there?!" he cried to Sprig, pointing behind him. "Ah! What is it? Danger?" Sprig asked, before his head was smacked with a stick. "I said trust no one," said Tritonio. "Now follow me, and we'll begin the next lesson." He hops back into the tower and Sprig follows him.

"This guy's awesome," said Polly. Darrel crossed his arms and shrugged, "I gotta hand it to him, he's quick on his feet." "Ehh, we'll see," said Anne. "Just give him a chance Anne," said Darrel.

Inside the tower, the walls were covered with weapons, helmets, shields, and target dummies. "Your next lesson is to pick your weapon," said Tritonio. "Find one that resonates with you."

Polly looks over to a bucket of blue mushrooms, which Tritonio describes as Boom Shrooms. Darrel takes a stroll around the armory, trying to find a weapon that calls to him. Without the Eternal Staff, Darrel feels vulnerable to any attack. "Having trouble, young man?" Tritonio asked. "Yes," said Darrel. "There's so many weapons, how can I choose?"

"Do not look with your eyes," said Tritonio. "Look in your gut, what does your gut tell you?" Darrel closed her eyes and took a deep breath. He opens his eyes, and looks to a pair of gauntlets that contain hidden blades. "Magnifique," said Tritonio. "You have chosen wisely."

Darrel puts on the blade gauntlets and unsheathes them, revealing a tint of glowing red. "Now that's what I call a fighter," said Tint. "But I've never used a weapon like this before," said Darrel. "And I hope you don't have to," said Tint. "Until then, keep these words in mind, 'True courage is about knowing not when to take a life. But when to spare one.'"

For the rest of the day, Darrel, Tint, Sprig, and Polly excelled in enduring obstacle courses. Anne, however, wasn't putting in a lot of effort. Whenever she lacked behind, Darrel kept watch to make sure she got through every obstacle.

While climbing on the tower, Tritonio encouraged the kids. "That's it children, feel the stone beneath your hands. The strong breeze in your hair, much like the breeze on a fast moving train."

"Why would he mention a moving train?" Tint asked. "I don't know, but isn't he encouraging?" Sprig said. "Must be nice," said Anne sarcastically. "Anne, your hand placement is all wrong!" Tritonio called out. "What'd I tell ya? The guy's totally picking on me," said Anne.

"You know, it wouldn't hurt to ask him why he's being hard," said Tint. "He's right," said Sprig. "Tritonio says, 'An honest dialogue is more powerful than any weapon.'" Anne replied in disgust, "That's the corniest thing I've ever heard-"

Not realizing that she let go of the wall, Anne stumbles back and falls. But Darrel catches her by her arm, "I got you, Anne." Anne smiles, but then Tritonio says, "Even your fall needs work, Anne."

Later that night, Anne was sitting on top of the tower feeling gloomy. She told her friends that she wanted to be alone, however Darrel thought otherwise. He sits by her side, getting her attention. "I thought maybe you could use a human friend in this situation," he said. Anne gestured her hand allowing him to sit next to her.

The two stared off into the starry night, unaware that Anne was leaning her head on Darrel's shoulder. Suddenly, Tritonio appeared behind them. "You two should eat. Only fools fight on an empty stomach," he said. Darrel takes a bowl of food and decides to let them talk it out.

"Tritonio, can I ask you something? Why don't you like me?" Anne asked. "What? I like you, Anne," said Tritonio. "But, you've been super tough on me for no reason," said Anne. "Just like my teachers back home."

Tritonio listened and said, "Anne, if I seemed tougher on you, it's not because I don't like you. It's because I see a girl who is not living up to her full potential." "Really?" Anne asked. "Indeed," he replied. "In you I sense someone that, with a little effort, could achieve greatness. And I am sure, your teachers back home, feel the same way."

"He's not wrong about that," said Darrel. "I used to have trouble with teachers. But when I asked for help, they were always there to give me the boost I needed. Don't think you can do everything by yourself Anne. It never hurts to ask for help or encouragement."

Anne smiles at the two, then Tritonio offers her a sword as her weapon. She unsheathes it showing off a faint blue glow. "Get some sleep children," said Tritonio. "For tomorrow, the real training begins." Anne and Darrel smile at each other, knowing that they are ready to listen.

The next day, Anne improved on her swordplay. Darrel got used to using hidden blades, making him feel like a rogue assassin. Tritonio was impressed by all the kids' skills. Eventually, he prepares them for something he calls the "Final Test."

He opens a door to a lower chamber, showing blueprints and railroad maps. "Tomorrow is our last day together," Tritonio announced. "So, I put together an exercise to test all your skills you've learned. I have rented a train, inside of which I have hidden a 'fake' priceless ruby. Also, I have hired actors to portray guards who will stop at nothing to keep the ruby safe. You must retrieve it, using the wisdom and skills I have taught you. Now study these plans, become one with the plans, eat the plans."

He takes a piece of the plan and eats it to prove his point. "We leave at dawn." As he leaves the kids alone, they start questioning his plan. "So, does anyone else think that we're robbing an actual train?" Sprig asked. Darrel and Tint quickly nodded, "No doubt about it," they said. "I could see it a mile away," said Darrel.

"That's ridiculous," said Anne. "Tritonio is a good person who believes in me. I think we should do it." "You seem oddly invested," said Tint. "What happened to 'Teacher's Stink' Anne?" Polly asked. "That Anne is dead and buried," replied Anne.

While the Plantars were convinced, Darrel and Tint were not. As they got to the railroad to proceed with their plan, Darrel casts a

messenger spell to the driver and the guards. The light startled the guards, but Darrel assured them he's not an enemy.

"Listen, our teacher Tritonio told us about this ruby stored on this train. And said you guys are actors, is that true?" "Tritonio?!" The driver asked. "That man is a criminal. He says we're actors, but we're not. That man has gotten away with many things, using his charm and agility."

Realizing that Tritonio's a criminal, Darrel and Tint come up with a plan. They explained to the driver and guards what's going to happen. Tint told them to play along, try to fight back, and protect the ruby. At the same time, Darrel will make his move to catch Tritonio. After that, the guards will contact the police to arrest him.

The Plantars go along with their plan, and Darrel and Tint follow behind them. Sprig gets them to stop the train, using his injured acting skills. Meanwhile, the rest of the group sneak onboard and start the train up again.

They escape from the driver and guards with ease and make their way into the treasury. What the group didn't see was that Darrel climbed onto the side of the car and casted a curse on the ruby.

The kids climb in the car and gaze at the ruby in magnificence. "We did it guys," said Anne. "Big T is gonna be so proud of us." "Proud is an understatement," said Tritonio as he jumped in the car. "You've all done so well."

That's when Darrel and Tint nodded, "Hey Tritonio, what was the first lesson you taught us?" "I know," said Anne. "Trust no one." "Exactly," said Darrel. He unsheathes his blades and points them at Tritonio. "Don't trust a master thief!"

"Woah, Darrel!" Polly cried. "It all makes sense now," said Darrel. "The train, the guards, the charming encouragement. He has thief written all over him. Tritonio chuckled, "Clever boy. I have to say, even I'm impressed."

"Wait, so you really are a master thief?" Anne asked. "Indeed I am," replied Tritonio. "And now, I'll be taking my ruby and leaving you all here to the guards." "You have no idea how outnumbered you are, Tritonio," said Darrel. "Get him guys!"

Sprig and Polly jump after him, only for Tritonio to take out his Sabre and slam Sprig onto Polly. Tint comes after him with shurikens, but he dodges them and steps on his head, confusing him. Anne and Darrel start to swing their blades at Tritonio, only for him to continue dodging and knocking them down to the ground.

Tritonio makes his way to the ruby with the entire group groaning on the ground. "Trusting you was a mistake," said Darrel. "But, you made a huge mistake too." "What mistake?" Tritonio asked. "You forget, I taught you what I know."

As he touches the ruby, he instantly freezes solid in place. "Woah, how did he-?" Sprig asked. "Freeze spell," said Tint. "Curse 101." The kids get up from the ground and stop the train. Darrel stares down at his defeated instructor. "You taught me what you know," said Darrel. "But, I didn't teach you what I know."

Later, the driver and guards arrive with the police. At that time, the curse wore off and Tritonio was unfrozen. "Thanks kids," said the driver. "The tower's been trying to catch this slimeball for months. Been robbing trains with kids for several times now, the sicko." "Well there was one flaw that he failed to see," said Darrel. "A couple of us are teenagers."

The cops take him on the train, changing course to the tower. "See you around Darrel and Anne," said Tritonio. "I wasn't kidding when I said you had potential. You both certainly bested me."

"Save it you crook," said Anne. "I just have one more question for you. Was the goatee even real?" Tritonio takes it off for a moment, "What do you think?" The guards close the door, and the train takes off.

Back at the tower, the kids sit at the front door, battered and worn out. "Guess you hate teachers now more than ever, Anne?" Sprig asked. "You know, Tritonio might have been a crook, but I think he was on to something," said Anne. "When I get home, I'm going to give my teachers another chance."

Darrel smiled, "That's very noble of you Anne." He places his hand on his shoulder making Anne smile too. "You're turning into a great person, I thought you'd be." Then, the kids hear Bessie's chirp. They see Bessie, Hop pop, and Cronaxx all battered and bruised like them.

"Hey kids," said Hop pop in a tired tone. "How was the convention for you two?" Anne asked. "Oh fine," replied Cronaxx. "We didn't get swarmed by killer locusts if that's what you mean. How was your weekend?" "Good," said Tint in a blank voice. "We didn't partake in a train heist." "Nope, no crimes committed," said Polly.

"Good," said Hop pop. "Great to know we definitely didn't have two wacky adventures." Darrel stands up and says, "Let's just go home." "Agreed," said Anne. The kids climb on Bessie, and Hop pop takes them home. The group remains silent throughout the trip.

Back at the farm, Darrel was cleaning the gemstone on the Eternal Staff. "I hope you didn't go through too much trouble without it," said Cronaxx. Darrel shook his head, "I'm as dependent on using my own hands, than I am with just the staff Cronaxx." "Then consider this lesson learned," said Cronaxx. Darrel places the staff in the umbrella rack and makes his way into the basement.

Darrel spots Anne cleaning her weapon that Tritonio gave her. "Thinking about keeping it?" Darrel asked. "Yeah, there's something about this sword that I like," said Anne. Darrel looks at his hidden blade gauntlets. "I think I'll store these," he said. "Who knows, maybe I'll need them again one day." Darrel packs them in his school bag and begins to practice his plant magic.

Year of the Spore

Amphibia

Chapter 21 - Year of the Spore

In Hop pop's study, a miniature ship shines from the sunlight in the window. She is named The Green Lady. Shown with a green mermaid on the bow of the ship, along with green boards, green flags, and green sails, the ship gets blown by Hop pop for visual effects.

"I gotta say, you put a lot of effort into this," said Cronaxx. "I sure did," said Hop pop. "With careful precision, and proper dedication, this ol' gal shall be seaworthy." Hop pop places the last plank on the ship, declaring her complete. "Five years of work has finally paid off."

Suddenly, a ball gets thrown through the window nearly hitting the two elders. Hop pop dives in to save his ship. "My baby!" he cried. Luckily, the two weren't hurt. "Whew, that was close," said Cronaxx.

Anne and Darrel come up to the window. "Sorry about that guys," said Darrel. "Yeah, we were just teaching Polly how to play kickball," said Anne. "Which is challenging for obvious reasons," said Sprig. "Next time, I'm gonna help Polly be her legs," said Tint.

Hop pop was angry, "Dang it kids, what have I told you about rough housing near the windows?!" Cronaxx placed his hand on his shoulder in an effort to calm him down. "Now, how about you guys come in and play a quiet game?" Cronaxx asked. "Sure Uncle," said Tint.

Darrel and Anne take notice of Hop pop's ship. "Nice toy boat," said Anne. "It's not a toy boat, Anne. It's a model ship," corrected Darrel. "My father has a model of the Titanic displayed on our fireplace. So what is she called, Hop pop?" "This ship right here Darrel, is the

replica of the Green Lady: A famous warship dated back long ago," said Hop pop.

Anne simply shrugged, "Potato, tomato." And the kids leave the window and enter the house. Cronaxx fixes the window with his magic, until the kids burst in the study. "Tongue Tag!" Sprig called out. The kids run around the study, hoping to not get tagged by Sprig. Especially Anne and Darrel, considering that their tongues are not as long as frogs.

The kids were laughing and running all over Hop pop's study. Hop pop tried to get them under control, but they wouldn't listen. When Polly jumped onto the table, Sprig attacked her with his tongue. Polly dodged just in time, but Sprig's tongue hit the ship. Causing it to knock over and slam down to the ground.

"AAAHHH!" screamed Hop pop. "Why don't you kids ever listen to me?!" Then he turns his attention to Cronaxx. "And you! Shouldn't your nephew and human be training magic?!" Cronaxx put his hands up, "I'm sorry Hop pop, but we're on break from magic training." Cronaxx snaps his fingers, and the ship magically repairs itself.

"Shouldn't I have reminded you? You have wizards living in your farmhouse." Hop pop, seeing his ship back to normal, feels a little bit better. He looks at his ship and finds that he needs more supplies to finish the ship. "Looks like she needs a few more supplies until she's finished," he said. "To Loggle's everyone!"

The group takes Bessie to Loggle's woodshop. Hop pop gives Anne and Darrel mushroom treats in case Bessie acts up. While they were waiting, Bessie started to act up like Hop pop warned them. So they give her some mushrooms, and she runs wild in circles. The kids cheered, until the cops arrived to give them a ticket.

Thankfully, Darrel pays off the ticket to the cops just as Hop pop came out with his supplies. "Did you get everything you need, Hop pop?" Sprig asked. "I sure did boy," he replied. Cronaxx looks at his

supplies, only to find a small glowing purple ooze in the box. "Now all I need is a quiet afternoon to finish this gal."

"I promise you Hop pop, from now on, we'll be on our best behavior," said Darrel. "And don't worry about this," Darrel reveals a ticket from behind his back. "Me and the salamanders paid for it." Hop pop nodded in understanding and the group returned home.

Back at the farm, Hop pop entered first in hopes of finishing The Green Lady. Anne held her stomach indicating that she's getting hungry. "I bet there's one more beetle bite left in the kitchen," said Sprig. "Race you guys there," said Tint. The kids rush in accidentally shoving Hop pop in the process. Shoving him, caused the ship to break again, and made Hop pop very upset.

Later that night, Cronaxx woke up to get a drink of water. Suddenly, he spots Hop pop with the same vial of purple ooze he saw earlier. He stays hidden in the shadows and whispers, "What are you up to, Hopediah?"

The next morning, Hop pop was making breakfast for the gang. Cronaxx sat in his seat with a mug of bog water. "Good morning Hopediah," he greeted. "Good morning Cronaxx," said Hop pop. "Kids! Breakfast!"

"I'm sure they'll come," said Cronaxx. "Dang kids take forever to wake up," said Hop pop as he turns his head to the stove. But when he turns around again to serve Cronaxx, he sees the kids sitting by his side. Their pupils were dilated and showed a dark purple.

"Good morning Hop pop," The kids said simultaneously. "Okay," said Hop pop, surprised that whatever he gave them made them obedient. He serves them breakfast, "Now, I'm going to work on my ship. So I want you kids to finish your breakfast quickly, then sit on that couch and not say a -" He turned back to see their plates empty and they left immediately. "Word."

He looks into the living room and finds the kids sitting still on the couch. "Yes, Hop pop," they said. Hop pop slightly grins at their behavior. Cronaxx however, was stern. Arms crossed and stared down at Hop pop. "I don't know what you did to make those kids look zombified, but I'm going to find out." "It's just for one day, it's not that big of a deal," said Hop pop. "It is a big deal, because you got my great nephew involved," said Cronaxx.

Cronaxx steps outside, while Hop pop resumes working on his ship. He turns around to see the kids still sitting on the couch, just like he told them to. "Hey kids," he said nervously. "Hey, Hop pop," they said. Hop pop shutters in horror, realizing the strength of what he used on them.

"Why don't you kids go outside and play?" Hop pop asked. "Yes, Hop pop," they said unanimously. Hop pop watches as they blandly play outside, and Cronaxx glaring at him with a stern look. "Better close these to cut down the glare," he said to himself as he closed the shutters.

Later in the night, Hop pop was nearly finished with the Green Lady. "Still, I shouldn't use more of that gunk on the kids," he whispered to himself. "Something about it just don't sit right with me."

He looks back to the kids, who are sitting on the couch now, along with Cronaxx. Darrel and Anne started blinking, signaling that the effects wore off. "Ugh, my head," said Darrel. Anne yawned, "Man, I feel funky." Sprig shook his head, "Like I was a prisoner in my own body." Then, Polly and Tint came back to reality, which made Cronaxx smile.

"I'm glad to see things are normal again," he said. "Normal," said Polly. "I have all this anger building up inside me. And I don't know what to do with it!" "Then let's shake it off with another round of tongue tag," said Tint. "Heck yeah," said Darrel. "Let's play in Hop pop's room," said Polly. "I like the obstacles."

In Hop pop's study, the kids were running around while Hop pop was trying to stop them. Cronaxx smiled, wondering if Hop pop is going to use that same remedy again on the kids. "Go to bed now and I'll give you ten coppers each!" Hop pop cried. The kids agreed, much to the excitement of having money.

Hop pop takes out the vial, while Cronaxx was listening outside his study. "I'll just by myself a little more time. And then, never again," said Hop pop. Cronaxx waits in the kitchen to surprise Hop pop and catch him in the act.

He sees Hop pop go into the basement and sprinkle the glowing purple ooze on their faces. He exits the basement, closing the door, until he turns to see Cronaxx. He was cross. "Hop pop!" Cronaxx shouted, surprising Hop pop. "Oh, Cronaxx. Uh, how's it going?"

"What do you think you are doing?!" He takes the vial from Hop pop's hand and analyzes it with his own good eye. "How could you? On your own children? My Great Nephew!" "I'm sorry," said Hop pop. "But it was the only way to get them to behave." "Do you have any idea what this stuff is?" Cronaxx asked. "It's just a remedy full of enzymes," replied Hop pop. "They're not enzymes," said Cronaxx.

Suddenly, they hear banging on the basement door. "They're spores!" Cronaxx cried. The basement door opens up, revealing Darrel and Anne in a zombified state. Their eyes glow bright purple, and have mushrooms growing out of their heads. Then, Sprig, Tint, and Polly come down in the same state the humans are in.

They open the door showing a hooded figure outside. "Knock knock," said the figure. "You," said Cronaxx sternly. "You've met Gary?" Hop pop asked. "Ah, Cronaxx. How long has it been?" 'Gary' asked. "Far too long," said Cronaxx. "I thought I got rid of you." "You almost did," said Gary. "But now, I'm back. And I have come to witness the birth of my children."

"Children?" Hop pop asked. "He's not wrong," said Cronaxx. He approaches Gary and removes his hood. Revealing a giant glowing

mushroom on top of a frog's head. Hop pop gasped in shock. "Behold, my true beautiful self!" Gary announced.

"You see I am a rare species of mushroom able to control the mind of its host. And soon all of Amphibia will be under my command!" Lightning strikes during his cackling. "You'll never get away with this," said Hop pop.

"Silence!" Gary said. "Also, eyes up here buddy." Gary points to the mushroom on the frog's head, gesturing that the mushroom is talking and not the frog. "To me, my mushroom children!" Gary announced. Then, all of Wartwood comes out affected by the glowing mushrooms, especially Mayor Toadstool.

Hop pop and Cronaxx close the door with the kids inside. "We have to hold them off," said Hop pop. "That's going to be impossible," said Cronaxx. "These kids will stop at nothing until we are one. We need help." "But who will help us?" Hop pop asked. "Everyone is infected, all except..." "Bessie," they said together.

Suddenly, frogs start entering the windows and doors of the house. They immediately grab Cronaxx by his limbs and start upchucking spores. "You have to go, Hopediah," he said. "I'll buy you some time!" "But Cronaxx-" "Just GO!"

Cronaxx snaps his fingers just as Tint spews spores on his forehead. Hop pop retreated to his study, grabbed his ship and jumped out. As he runs across the farm, he looks back to see Cronaxx covered in spores and Darrel taking the lead. He started to dance, and everyone followed, including Gary. "Oh my, this looks fun," he said.

(Thriller - Michael Jackson)

Darrel:

It's close to midnight

Something evil's lurking in the dark

Under the moonlight

You see a sight that almost stops your heart

You try to scream

But terror takes the sound before you make it

You start to freeze

As horror looks you right between the eyes

You're paralyzed

You hear the door slam

And realize there's nowhere left to run

You feel the cold hand

And wonder if you'll ever see the sun

You close your eyes

And hope that this is just imagination, girl

But all the while

You hear a creature creeping up behind

You're out of time

They're out to get you

There's demons closing in on every side

They will possess you

Unless you change that number on your dial

Now is the time

For you and I to cuddle close together, yeah

All through the night

I'll save you from the terror on the screen

I'll make you see

(Dance sequence)

Thriller

Thriller night

'Cause I can thrill you more

Than any ghoul would ever dare try

So let me hold you tight

And share a

(Killer, diller, chiller)

(Thriller here tonight)

'Cause this is thriller

Thriller night

Girl, I can thrill you more

Than any ghoul would ever dare try

So let me hold you tight

And share a

(Killer, thriller)

Ow!

Hop pop raced as fast as he could to Bessie's barn, only for Polly to give away his hiding place. The kids and Cronaxx hold him down, while Gary comes in with a jar of spores. "Time for your assimilation," said Gary.

"Sorry to disappoint you, you compost eating fiend," said Hop pop. "But I've got ya where I want ya." He looks at his ship with tearful eyes. "Goodbye sweet lady. May you find safe harbor in the beyond."

He throws the Green Lady into Bessie's pen, unlocking the door. "Bessie! Snack Time!" Hop pop called. Bessie went straight to eating all the mushrooms. Gary accidentally drops his jar of spores and spills all over the floor.

Bessie doesn't miss a single mushroom. She clears all the heads of the infected citizens of Wartwood. Eventually, she goes after Gary. He begs Hop pop to call off his snail. He tells Hop pop if he gets eaten, he'll be wiped off the face of the planet. Hop pop shrugged it off and pushed Gary into Bessie's mouth.

After Gary gets eaten, his frog host returns to normal, calling himself Lloyd. Then, the rest of Wartwood returns to normal. Hop pop was grateful that he saved them all. However, he wasn't out of the woods yet.

He hears throat clearing behind him, revealing Darrel, Anne, the Salamanders and his grandkids with stern looks, arms crossed. "I know, no matter how important my ship was, it didn't give me the right to use mind control on you," said Hop pop.

"Exactly," said Cronaxx. "You especially don't have the right to mind control my nephew!" "But," said Darrel. "We were reckless lately, so we are at fault too. We'll try to be better about listening to you."

Hop pop chuckled, "I guess we're even then." "Oh you're not even," said Tint. "He's right," said Cronaxx. "Starting tomorrow, I'm taking charge of the farm until you finish all of Tint's chores." "What?" Hop pop cried. Then Tint snaps his fingers making Hop pop's shirt smoke.

Hop pop screamed, thinking he was on fire. But it was just a simple smoke spell Tint casted to scare him. "Come on kids," said Cronaxx. "I'll make us some mushroom soup." The kids agreed and they closed Bessie's stable.

Anne of the Year

Amphibia

Chapter 22 - Anne of the Year

After all the commotion with the mushroom colony, Hop pop was forced to do all of Tint's chores. Hop pop was able to complete them quickly and steadily, before the end of the day. Eventually, the group called it even with Hop pop, and he's back on good terms with the group.

In the center of Town Square, all of Wartwood gathered together for a yearly event. The group arrived to view the event. Anne and Darrel were confused with what's going on.

"Man, what is with this crowd?" Anne asked. "Are fruit flies on sale or something?" Darrel laughed. "Nope," said Hop pop. "Today's the day they announce the Frog of the Year award." "The what now?" Darrel asked. "The Frog of the hoppin' Year," said Sprig. "Every year, the town gets together and votes on the frog they think best embodies the values of Wartwood."

"We all voted last week," said Polly. "Even the Salamanders did too. Don't you remember?" "Not exactly," said Darrel. "Me and Anne were listening to music last week. We had a blast."

(Flashback)

The Plantars and the Salamanders were about ready to head out into town. Anne and Darrel were sitting in the living room listening to their favorite song. "Anne, Darrel," said Cronaxx. "We're about to head into town to vote for Frog of the Year. Wanna come?" Unable to hear what Cronaxx said, Darrel and Anne sang, "*No, you'll never make us go.*" "Suit yourselves," said Hop pop. The amphibians leave the house just as Anne and Darrel started dancing.

(Flashback ends)

Just then, the group hears Mayor Toadstool announce on the stand. "Alright folks, it's time! As ya'll know the Frog of the Year goes to the most noble, selfless, blah blah blah, let's get on with it." The impatient mayor made Darrel shake his head in disgust. 'With an attitude like that, I'd doubt that he'd win this year,' he thought.

Toadie gives him the envelope and Mayor Toadstool announces the winner. "And the Frog of the Year goes to..." He reads in disbelief, "Now this can't be right: Anne Boonchuy?!"

The whole town gasped, including the group. Anne stood in disbelief, until the whole crowd cheered. Hop pop pushed her up to the stand and told her to get up there. "A Plantar, Frog of the Year," he said. "I can't believe this," said Darrel. "My best friend, touching the hearts of all of Wartwood. I'm so proud of her."

Anne gets up to the podium to see all of Wartwood cheer for her. She smiles at them feeling joyful. "I don't know what to say," she said. "I do," said Toadstool. "Are you people out of your frog dang minds?!"

Hearing Toadstool's voice made Darrel step up, "No, they are not. As a matter of fact, I think they made the right choice!" "But she doesn't deserve to host a party," said Toadstool. "What party?" Anne asked. "It's one of our oldest traditions," said Toadie. "The Frog of the Year has to put on an incredible party for the whole town."

"Yeah, and that party is supposed to demonstrate the Frog of the Year's selflessness," said Toadie. "Anne is selfless far from it." "You just can't accept the fact that Anne is more selfless than you," said Darrel. "Your actions are what caused you to lose that award in the first place! While Anne here did much more for us than you ever did."

"Darrel's right," said Anne. "And besides, I'll show you, by putting on a party so big it will blow your minds!" The town remained silent, and confused. "It's just an expression," said Darrel. "She meant it'll be a

great party." The town cheered, and Anne placed her arm around Darrel. Toadstool leaves the podium, still believing that her party will fail.

Back at the Plantar house, Anne and the gang were getting plans together to pull off the best party ever. Anne placed her plans on the living room table. "Here are the plans for throwing the best party ever, and proving that mayor wrong." "Anne, don't worry about what that mayor said," said Sprig. "Just have fun planning your party."

"You're frog of the year," said Polly. "Okay guys listen up," said Anne. The group gather around the table and look at the plans. "A great party has three ingredients: Entertainment, Exclusivity, and Spectacle. Hop pop, Cronaxx, you're in charge of entertainment. I dub thee, Masters of Ceremonies"

Hop pop and Cronaxx nodded, "I've been waiting for this day my whole life," said Hop pop. "I can make fabulous fireworks," said Cronaxx. "Polly, Tint, you're exclusivity," said Anne. "So it's your job to decide who gets into the party and who doesn't." She gives them a velvet rope, while Tint puts on a pair of shades. "Time to take action, Polly," he said.

"What about me, Anne?" Sprig asked. "You have the most important job of all, the Spectacle," said Anne. Sprig was so happy, he couldn't stand still. "At the party..." Anne said with a stern look. Until she gave off a sparkling look with wide eyes, "... You're going to tell Ivy how you feel about her." Sprig suddenly gives a surprised shocking look as if something slammed into his face.

Anne gives off a lecture about how romantic confessions she read in magazines help bring shines to spectacles. Sprig however didn't feel up to the task. "I don't know, Anne." "Please, Sprig?" Anne begged. "I need you to make this party amazing." Eventually, Sprig reluctantly agreed. "Come on everyone, let's bring the thunder!" Anne and the group cheered.

Meanwhile, down in the basement, Darrel was looking down at the old photo of him and Sasha. He reflects on all his memories with her, which there weren't many. All those dinner dates he's had with her, even when she invited him, he paid for all the meals. All those birthday presents Darrel gave Sasha nearly made him bankrupt. And whenever he gets hurt, he usually sends Anne or Marcy to watch over him.

Darrel sighs as he looks at one of Anne's magazines. He skips to the page where Anne revealed the spectacle. Then, he looks to the photo of his friends and covers Sasha and Marcy, leaving Anne visible in his sight. He looks to his scar on his left hand, remembering all the times she's been there for him.

Suddenly, Tint comes into the basement. "Hey Darrel, we're about to leave to prepare Anne's party." Darrel looks up, remembering that they have a long day of hard work. "Oh, okay," he said in an unfocused tone.

"Are you okay, Darrel?" Tint asked. "Can you keep a secret Tint? I wanted it to be a surprise," said Darrel. "Sure, what is it?" Tint asked. "I think I've decided to move on from Sasha, and tell Anne how I feel about her," he replied.

Tint smiled at what his friend was about to do. "Really?" "After all the times she's been there for me, and all the time we spent together in the last month, I think I'm ready to move on from Sasha," said Darrel. "I want to have someone who will always listen to what I have to say. I want someone who never gives up on me, and I don't give up on her."

"I'm proud of you, man," said Tint. "But what if she's not interested?" "If she's not," said Darrel. "Then at least I'm lucky to be friends with her." Tint smiles, "Whatever happens, I'll have your back." Darrel smiles too, "Thanks Tint. Now come on, let's get going." The two leave the basement and head into town square.

At the town square, everyone in town was helping get the party ready. Loggle was making a wood carving of Anne, Stumpy was on stew, decorations were working well. Cronaxx was working on safe non powerful fireworks, and Hop pop was working on his comedy act. Sprig was working up the courage to work on the courage to tell Ivy how he feels about her. Polly and Tint were messing around with the velvet rope, tugging and swinging it.

However, their goofing off caused a chain reaction. They hit a bystanding frog, who sets off a few fireworks, that spill a couple of crates. Toadstool and Toadie walk by to see the small foul-ups. "What'd I tell you, Toadie. She's going to be the worst Frog of the Year ever."

Anne wasn't going to let that stand. Soon she started to boss people around, asking for more than what she anticipated. Eventually, she started talking nonsense, even Darrel was having trouble understanding. "Anne, do you think you're taking this a little too seriously?" Sprig asked. Anne shouted, "NOOOO! Now hop to it everyone. We've only got twelve hours left!"

It is now night time in Wartwood. There were sparkling lights all over the party grounds. Frogs lining up in a long line, slowly getting into the party. Tint and Polly were doing their job excluding frogs who were not welcome to the party. Eventually, they let them in anyway.

Anne Boonchuy, stands in her white party outfit. Swinging a cane and a drink in her hand welcomes all the party goers. Cronaxx sets off the welcoming fireworks and the crowd awes in amazement.

With the party started, Darrel looked around seeing everything going off without a hitch. The frog performs proficiently on the DJ. Stumpy prepares Sashimi for the guests, which turns out to be a giant mudskipper. The mayor seemed impressed, until it was revealed to be alive.

Hop pop struggled with entertainment, while Sprig failed to confess to Ivy. The frogs had no idea how to dance to DJ music. Darrel

watched as the party started to unravel. He goes to Anne to tell her what's going on.

Darrel finds Anne trying to teach the frogs how to dance to the music. "Anne, we've got big problems," said Darrel. "What are you talking about?" Anne asked. Darrel points to Hop pop who ran off stage, to Sprig hiding from Ivy, and to the mudskipper that's chasing away all the frogs and damaging the dance floor with it's flopping.

Anne looks to her sash and looks down in sorrow. "This is all my fault, this party stinks. Some selfless frog of the year I turned out to be." Darrel looks at Anne and says, "Maybe this party is a bust. But that doesn't mean you can't make things right. These frogs are in trouble and they need our help. You know it and I know it."

The two see the mudskipper knock over Anne's statue, eventually setting fire across the party grounds. Anne takes her sash and declares, "I'm fixing this right now!" Darrel smiles and takes his staff in his hands. "I'm right beside you. What's the plan?" "Just follow my lead," said Anne.

The two ran up to the mudskipper. Anne jumped above its head, while Darrel casted a tame charm on the fish. Anne wrapped her sash around its mouth and Darrel hopped on its back. The two rode around grabbing all the citizens of Wartwood, including Mayor Toadstool.

"Time to fan the flames," said Darrel. Darrel points the staff in the air, calling for a rain cloud to extinguish the flames. The mudskipper runs out of breath, and the fires get put out. The rain cloud fades away as the crowd cheers.

"Haha, We did it!" Darrel cried. "Yeah, we did it," said a glum Anne. "Mayor Toadstool, you were right about me. I am selfish. I got so obsessed of proving I deserve this, I ruined everything. I'm no frog of the year. Why did anyone even vote for me?"

"Hop pop and Cronaxx walk up to Anne. "Anne, we didn't vote for you because you were flawless," said Hop pop. "The townspeople voted for you because of how far you've come," said Cronaxx. "You've grown so much in your time in Amphibia. And this town wouldn't be the same without you, or Darrel."

Darrel places his arm around Anne, making her smile, and the crowd cheer for her again. Eventually, Mayor Toadstool gave in and put his greedy pride aside. "Gosh dang it. I try to fight it, but I have to say. Even I'm impressed with how you just saved the town from a raging inferno." He hands over the sash back to Anne. "This belongs to you."

Anne, feeling grateful again, grips her sash. "Thanks Mayor," she said. "Yeah, yeah, don't mention it," said Toadstool. "Now come on everyone, let's try to salivate this party shall we?" Everyone cheered, including the mudskipper who flipped his tail.

The citizens of Wartwood were able to salvage what little party was left. Stumpy prepared the food and looked after the mudskipper. The country folk got music and dance together. Darrel watched in amazement, seeing that everything turned out better than it used to be. He looks to see Anne and Sprig sitting together, and realizes that he has one last thing to do to make things better.

Anne was sitting at the table, apologizing to Sprig. "I'm sorry I tried to rush you into confessing your love to Ivy. You do that when you're good and ready." Sprig smiled, "Thanks Anne, when the moment strikes, I'll know it."

Just then, Ivy came up to Sprig and Anne. "Hey Sprig," she started, looking quite nervous. "There's something I've been meaning to ask you. Um, do you? Um? Do you think you want to go out with me sometime?" Ivy made Sprig and Anne gasp in excitement. Sprig accepts her offer and goes off to dance with her.

Anne smiled just as Darrel came up. "Hey Anne, is this seat taken?" Darrel asked. Anne gestured to him to sit next to her, and so he did.

"Those two are good for each other," said Darrel "Yeah, I think their relationship will work out," said Anne. "Falling in love is easy, but it's the staying in love part that's challenging."

"Yeah," said Darrel in a gloomy tone. "What's wrong Darrel?" Anne asked. "I'm sorry that I didn't stop you in that thrift store," said Darrel. "If I had just said something, we wouldn't be in this mess."

"Hey, for what it's worth, I'm glad you didn't stop me," said Anne. "If you had, we wouldn't have met Sprig, or Tint, and you wouldn't have gained magical powers. Plus having you with me by my side, that's what made the difference."

Darrel smiled, "Honestly, I'm not so sure what I'm doing at this point. But, at least I'm trying. And there is one thing I know I'm sure of." "What's that?" Anne asked. Darrel looks at his photo one last time, and decides, it's now or never.

"There's no graceful way of saying this, so I'm going to say it," said Darrel. "I know we've had our moments in the past month. And most of them were exciting, some confusing, and some moments that don't mean anything at all. But through all of those moments, I had more fun with you than I ever had with Sasha."

Anne perked up, surprised at what Darrel was saying. "Darrel? Are you saying that you like me more than Sasha now?" Darrel took a deep breath, "Yes, as in 'like' like you. Whatever this thing is between us, I want to give it a chance." Anne blushes as Darrel's staff glows bright pink.

"I was kinda aware of that," said Anne. "While you were sick, you told me you loved me." Darrel takes her hand and asks her, "I know it'll be complicated, with Sasha being here as well. But, do you feel the same way? I'd really like to know."

Anne smiles from ear to ear, and takes a deep breath, "Of course I do, Darrel. Let's go for it, you and me." Darrel perked up, hearing her response. "Really?" "Really," replied Anne.

Darrel looks away for a moment, then places his hand on Anne's face. The two place a warm gentle kiss on their lips. At the same time, they feel a magical aura within their hearts. They hear fireworks as if their moment was on cue. And thanks to the staff, a sprinkling of little pink stars surround them.

They break away from their kiss, and smile at each other. "Darrel," said Anne. "I want you to love me. Because I love you." Darrel smiled like never before, "Okay, we're doing this. This is the most exciting thing that's ever happened to me."

Then, Darrel realized what has to happen next, "You do realize this means we're going to have to tell Sasha about this, right?" Anne suddenly remembers Sasha and looks down at what she's done. "Anne, it's the right thing to do," said Darrel.

Anne nodded in agreement, "You're right Darrel. Whatever happens, we stick together." "And I'm never going to let you go," said Darrel. Anne nodded, just as Toadie came up to them.

"Ms. Frog of the Year, and Darrel," he said. "There's someone waiting at the bridge for you both. They say they're a friend." Anne and Darrel were surprised, "A friend?" they asked.

The two humans walk outside of town to the bridge. They spot a dark cloaked figure waiting for them. It reveals to be wearing armor, beneath the cloak. It turns to their attention and has a faint surprise in its eyes. It removes the hood on its head, revealing it to be Sasha.

"Anne? Darrel?" "Sasha?!" They called out. Their shock was soon replaced with joy seeing them again for the first time in a while. They hugged, smiled, and were relieved. "Sasha," said Darrel. "We have so many questions," "I'm sure you both do," said Sasha. "Like where have you been? How did you get through all this? Is Marcy with you?" Anne asked.

"I'll fill you in later," said Sasha. "But for now, I'm just glad I found you guys. We came as soon as we heard." Anne and Darrel's smiles

soon disappeared when she said 'we'. "Who's we?" Darrel asked. "Just me and some friends of mine," said Sasha.

She gestures to a line of dark shadowy figures. A firefly flew over the one ahead of the group, revealing a scarred lip toad and two different glowing eyes. One sky blue and one light green. Darrel looked closely and realized what they were. "Toads."

"Nice to finally meet you, Anne Boonchuy and Darrel Loyaltät," said the leader. The figures behind him glowed with red eyes, shocking the two humans.

To be continued...

Well this is it. Darrel has confessed to Anne, Sasha has been found and they finally meet the toads leader face to face. There's going to be a lot of drama, a lot of heartbreak, a lot of fighting, and a lot of power. Who will rise? Who will fall? Find out when we return with the season finale: Reunion.

Reunion

Chapter 23 - Reunion

In the town of Wartwood, the Toad Army infiltrate the party and trash the place. The toads surround the frogs, and the rest that come in, bring stragglers. It was a horrifying moment, that the Toads who came from Toad Tower have come to scare the frogs. Darrel, Anne, and Sasha were watching from the bridge.

"Sasha, the toads!" Anne cried. "They're overrunning the whole town," said Darrel. "We have to stop them." Anne and Darrel took a few steps, until Sasha held them back. "Chill out guys, they're with me," she said.

Darrel was shocked, "They're WHAT?! Sasha, do you have any idea what they're doing?" Just then, the Plantars and the Salamanders came up to the humans. "Anne! Darrel! Anne! Darrel!" Sprig cried. "Toads! Everywhere!" "We know," said Anne. "We got some notion."

Polly hops to get everyone's attention, and points to Sasha. "Holy toot! Another Anne!" "Oh yeah," said Anne. "Meet one of my other besties from back home, Sasha." Sasha gives her greetings to the amphibians, "Hey."

"Sasha, meet the Plantars," said Anne. "This is Hop pop, Sprig, and Polly." "Sup?" Polly asked. "Sasha, I'd like you to meet the Salamanders," said Darrel. "This is Cronaxx, the elder wizard, and Tint his great nephew." "Hello there," said Tint. Sasha just glared down at Sprig and Tint.

"Yes, hi, nice to meet you," said Hop pop. "Now can someone tell me why there's a toad army attacking Warwood?!" "You're Hop pop?" Sasha asked. "I thought you'd be taller." Cronaxx glared, "What do you mean by that?"

"Relax," said Sasha. "We're not invading anything." She gives Hop pop a small smack as she walks by. "Come on, guys. You too, amphibians. We don't want to keep Grime waiting."

Cronaxx and the Plantars perked up by the mention of the name. "Captain Grime," scorned Cronaxx. "The cruelest toad soldier of all time?" Sprig asked. "Here?" Tint asked. "Yeah," replied Sasha. "He's not so bad once you get used to him. Now hurry up nerds."

Sasha makes her way into town square while the group remains at the bridge. "She is persuasive, right?" Anne makes her way back into Wartwood, while Darrel stays behind. "Cronaxx, how dangerous is Captain Grime?" he asked. "Very dangerous, and incredibly strict," he replied. "I once spent time in Toad Tower because I defied his request to use magic. But, I escaped. He can't be trusted, no matter what he says."

Captain Grime stands on a cobblestone wall. He is shown with rough dark skin, a scar over his right eye and lip. His eyes, one glassy and one glowing green, stared down on the frogs of Wartwood. Sasha, Anne, and Darrel stood by his side.

"Frogs of Wartwood!" Grime announced. "We toads have come here to..." The frogs waited in suspense, scared of what Grime was going to say. "... Invite you to a banquet." The frogs, and Darrel were shocked by this. "The moment we heard that Anne and Darrel were here, we rushed over to reunite these two friends and hold a celebration."

"Aw come here you guys." Sasha gives Anne and Darrel a heartwarming hug, and wraps her arm around Darrel's. "Really?" Hop pop asked. "Yes," replied Grime. "Despite my rough exterior, I really am just an 'old softie'." Sasha gestured Grime to smile, which he did in an evil way.

"So what do you say Wartwood?" Sasha asked. "Are you ready to party back at the Tower?" The crowd remained silent until, "What do Anne and Darrel think?" Mrs. Croaker asked. Sasha gives a cute

look in Darrel's face, and rubs her cheek on his. Darrel was uncomfortable, considering that it's the toads. But to Anne, she said, "Sasha's been my friend since kindergarten. If she says it's fine, it's fine."

"Whoo! All aboard the party barge!" Sasha announced. The frogs hop on the toad's party barge, that's being carried by a giant tarantula. Anne and Darrel were behind the frogs, but Sasha stopped them. "Darrel, Anne, you're with me." She points to her carriage.

"That's impressive," said Darrel. "Mind if the Plantars and the Salamanders come along too?" Anne asked. Sasha glared down, then said, "Of course I don't mind. The more the merrier." The Plantars cheered, but the Salamanders remained silent.

Along the journey, the Plantars and Anne were enjoying the ride on Sasha's carriage. Cronaxx, Tint, and Darrel however felt unease. "You get a bad feeling about this, Uncle?" Tint asked. "It's like going back into a dark memory Tint," he replied.

Darrel was watching the view, spotting the tower ahead. Sasha was sitting next to him. "Isn't this great, Darrel?" she asked. "We're finally together again, nothing can tear us apart." Darrel was at unease, "Uh, yeah. Um, I couldn't be more grateful finding you."

Sasha looks to the Eternal Staff. "So what's the deal with that jewel on a stick?" Sasha asked. "If you must know, this is the Eternal Staff," said Darrel. "It's the most powerful Staff known to all the wizards in Amphibia." Her reflection appears on the gemstone. "Ooh, so you have all the power in the world?" "Yes and no," said Darrel. "I'm still learning all there is to know about magic. There are some spells that are not meant to be casted."

Sasha takes his hand and says, "We'll when we get to Toad Tower, we'll make sure you're well trained by the best." Darrel glared at the thought in the staff, and Cronaxx looked cross at Sasha. For she does not know that Darrel is already being trained by a professional wizard.

The group, and the party barge arrive at Toad Tower The group stepped out first and Sasha introduced them to Toad Tower. "So, here we are." "Ominous," said an impressed Anne. "Obvious," said a concerned Darrel.

"Oh, Percy," Sasha called. A light green toad with a small helmet comes up. "Yes, Commander?" Percy asked. "I'm going to give Anne and Darrel a quick tour. Escort their friends to the banquet hall."

Sprig, Tint, and Polly want to go on the tour too, but Hop pop said, "Come on now kids, let Anne, Darrel and their friend get a chance to catch up." "Don't worry about it," said Anne. "We'll catch up with you guys later. Go ahead and have fun there." The amphibians head off into the banquet hall.

"You two seem certainly close with them," said Sasha. "Whatever happened to 'Ew! Frogs are the worst?'" "You'd be surprised to know how much we've grown since we got here," said Darrel. "The Salamanders were the ones who found me and took me in." "And the Plantars took me and the Salamanders in," said Anne. "We've been living in their basement since we got here."

Sasha was shocked, "A basement? Yuck! Follow me, I'm going to show you guys something crazy." She escorts them to her lounge quarters. "This is where I've been living," Darrel and Anne's eyes were impressed. "Hoopa de Boopa!" "Wowie Zowie!" Sasha's quarters were filled with luxurious furniture, statues and busts of Sasha, and posters of teen sensations from home.

Sasha snaps her fingers, "Yo, Brunton." The toad Brunton appears on command, "Oui, Commander?" "Bring us the usual," said Sasha. Before long, toads bring in platters of food from the human world that they perfected on making.

Darrel and Anne's mouths start to water. "No Way!" Darrel exclaimed. "Pizza? Tacos? Hamburgers? Spaghetti? Fried Chicken?!" "Woah, you've got ketchup?!" Anne exclaimed. "It just occurred to me we've been eating bugs for a month." They grab

whatever food they could and shove it in their mouths like starving animals.

"Anything else, Commander?" Bunton asked. "Run the hot water please, for the shower," replied Sasha. "Shower?!" exclaimed the two humans. "Yep," said Sasha. "Now Darrel, I hope you remember your mother's lesson." Darrel smiled and rolled his eyes, "I know, Ladies First. Just don't hog all that hot water."

While Anne was taking her shower, Darrel took a look around. Chills were sent down his spine, telling him that something was wrong. "So, are you impressed?" Sasha asked. She offered him a cup of hot chocolate, which he accepted. "I don't understand Sasha," said Darrel. "There's no way those toads would just make you a commander when they first saw you. What happened to you the past month?"

Sasha put her drink down and started from the beginning, "Funny enough, it was the toads that found me when I first came here. They locked me up in a dirty cell and forced me to eat bugs. Long story short, I saved them from giant herings, and they made me lieutenant. Now that I got the toads to follow Grime, I was able to find you and Anne."

Darrel listened to her story very carefully. "Wow." He gets up to look out the window. "But now that I've found you both, we can use my toad connections to find Marcy and get back home," said Sasha. She touches his hands that are still holding onto his drink. "Isn't that great, sweetie?"

Darrel looks down at his drink, then looks up at Sasha's smiling face. "I suppose. Look Sasha, I think we need to talk..."

But just before Darrel could talk, Anne came out of the shower. "Hah! I feel refreshed," she said. "Oh, looks like I'm next," said Sasha. "Hold that thought, Darrel." Sasha takes her turn while Darrel is left with Anne.

"You okay, Darrel?" Anne asked. Darrel sighed, "It's like I don't know her anymore. Back when we were kids, she used to always listen to me. Now she's got all this attention from an entire toad army. All this attention, all this power. If she's not careful, she's going to lose everything that's truly important to her. Not only that, I still think Grime is planning something. And I think Sasha is going to be the one to tell us."

After Sasha finished her shower, Darrel took his turn. And then the three humans sat while drinking hot coco. "Wow, Sash," said Anne. "This is so surreal, I can't believe you're really here." "I know right," said Sasha. "And once this is over, we can finally find a way out of this crummy gross world." Darrel perked up his eyes, "Once what's over?" "Oh the rebellion," replied Sasha. "Since when is there a rebellion?" Anne asked.

"Look, I'll explain," said Sasha. "Just promise not to freak out or anything." She walks over to reveal a large map of all Amphibia to Anne and Darrel. "So, you probably noticed that the toads in this valley have one job: To rule over the frogs. And lately, those frogs have been stepping out of line. Turns out these rebels have been inspired by a certain frog."

She walks to a scroll and reveals the leader to Anne and Darrel. "You might just know him. Stood up to tax collectors, even ran for mayor against the local Toad." The portrait is revealed to be Hopediah Plantar. "How is Hop pop a revolutionary?" Darrel asked. "He's a farmer."

Sasha plops a bunch of newspapers and says, "Doesn't matter. Word has traveled like wildfire, and we have got to make an example out of him. So the toads are just going to feed them to that thing." Sasha shows Anne and Darrel a giant feral venus flytrap being harnessed by Grime and a couple other toads.

"You're going to feed him to Audrey II?" Darrel asked. "Here's the thing," said Sasha. "I struck a deal with Grime: I help him capture

Hop pop, crush the rebellion, and Grime and his army will help us find a way home."

Anne and Darrel stood in shock. "The banquet trick, my idea obvi," said Sasha. "Now, we've got those slimy frogs right where we want them. Isn't this great?" "But what about Cronaxx and Tint?" Darrel asked. "They had nothing to do with this." "Who cares?" replied Sasha "They're just a couple of cheap magicians who got in the way."

Darrel and Anne look at each other, and realize what they have to do: Escape. "Could you excuse me for one moment? I need to use the restroom," said Darrel. "Actually, me too," said Anne. The two slip out of the door and rush off to rescue their amphibious friends.

The two rush to get down to the banquet hall. Darrel picks up some toad armor and weapons,, coming up with an idea to sneak past the toad guards. Darrel takes his staff, turns himself invisible, and carefully hides behind a cloaked Anne.

Anne opens the doors, revealing that the frogs are figuring out what's going on and the toads are ready to attack. "Enough!" she called in Sasha's tone. "Guards, leave us. I'll get these frogs to fall in line." She draws her sword and the toads leave, buying Anne's acting. The toads close the doors and Darrel and Anne reveal themselves to the frogs, Tint, and Cronaxx.

Sprig and Tint leap to their human friends, "We're so glad to see you," said Tint. "We've got a situation," said Sprig. "I know," said Darrel. "We're prisoners. And not only that, the toads plan to execute Hop pop." The frogs gasp, even Hop pop. "But why?" he asked. "Turns out, you've become an inspiration for rebellion all across the valley," She shows a copy of Hop pop's resistance poster to the group.

Hop pop takes a closer look at the poster and says, "Well, it's a good looking poster. I'M GONNA DIE!" Cronaxx steps up, "No, you're not

my friend. None of us are going to give you up to them." "So what do we do?" Ivy's mom asked.

"The important thing is that we don't panic," said Anne. "Does anyone have any ideas on how to get out?" Loggle, the woodsmith stands up and says, I dooooo....n't. I don't." Everyone groaned, until Wally got an idea.

"How about we plant Boom Shrooms around the joint, and blow the place sky high?" Darrel levitates Wally and magically removes the shrooms from his vest. "We are not taking the risk of blowing us up with it, Wally," he said. "No boom shrooms." "Aww," groaned Wally.

"Okay," said Anne. "There's only one way out, and the toads are blocking the door." Suddenly, Darrel smells a foul stench on the floor. He spots a manhole cover. "Guys, the sewers could be our only way out!" he cried. He opens the iron grate and Polly was the first to jump in.

Deep in the sewers, Anne and Darrel help guide the frogs of Wartwood through the sewers. Wally tried to set off some leftover boom shrooms, but Cronaxx and Tint took them away from him. "We're taking no chances," said Tint.

Eventually, Anne and Darrel find a way out. They open the grate that leads to the tower's courtyard. "Fresh air," said Anne. "Finally," said Darrel. But their celebration was only limited when weapons were being pointed at them.

The toads surrounded their only escape route and Sprig and Tint came up to see the trouble. Sasha comes from behind the toad army. "Oh you two," she said. "Very disappointing." There was no way out, the frogs, Tint, Cronaxx, Anne, and Darrel were in trouble. "Now let's move, Grime's waiting for us."

At the top of Toad Tower, Captain Grime is feeding a snack for his pet flytrap. He turns to see the frogs, Anne, and Darrel being

escorted by Sasha and the army. "Caught these prisoners trying to escape, Grime."

"Are you crazy?" Anne asked. "Shh," shushed Sasha. "I'm trying to get us home." "How is handing over Hop pop helping us get home?!" Darrel shouted. But Sasha shushed him too.

"Very impressive Sasha," said Grime. "Always playing Flipwart, when everyone else was playing Bog Jump." Darrel, Sasha, and Anne looked at him in a confusing way. Grime tried to explain that they are games that Amphibians play, until he realizes he's losing them.

"I'm trying to say you're smart," said Grime. "Oh, thanks Grimsey," said Sasha. They exchange their first high five. Darrel and Anne plead for one last time. "Sasha, come on," said Darrel. "There has to be another way," said Anne.

The toads point their weapons at Anne and Darrel. "There is no other way, creatures," said Grime. "Our very way of life is at stake. I don't expect outsiders like yourselves to understand."

He snaps his fingers and says, "Seize the traitor, Hopediah Plantar." Two toad guards proceed to take Hop pop by the arms and push Sprig and Polly aside. Anne and Darrel watched in horror, "Hop pop!" Anne cried. The two shove the toads, take their weapons and make the toads let go of Hop pop.

"Stay Back," said Anne. Darrel growled and gripped his glowing staff, preparing to fight. The toads got together and surrounded the frogs. But the frogs, Tint, and Cronaxx got into a fighting stance. It looked like a big fight was going to go down.

But then, "ENOUGH!" Sasha cried. "Anne, what are you doing? Are you really going to risk your life for these talking frogs? We don't even belong here. Don't you want to get back home? See your family?"

At that moment, Darrel recognized the talk tactic she's using. It was the same one she used back home to miss her family birthday party. Darrel had to try and stop her, "Hold on Sasha, we can't-" Before he could say anything else, Sasha put her finger on his mouth. Just like last time.

"Darrel, this is between the two of us. Just stay out of this. It has nothing to do with you," said Sasha. Darrel widened his eyes, he realized this was deja vu. Anne struggled to come up with words. Until Sasha said, "Then put your sword down now! End. Of. Discussion."

Darrel watched in horror as Anne was in the same scenario again. She struggled to keep her ground, and try to remain on Sasha's good side. Darrel couldn't believe that his girlfriend was doing this to Anne, again. He still wanted to go home, but not if him and his friends were being treated less. Anne lowers her sword, making Sasha feel victorious. "There we go, that's my girl," she said. "There, now that wasn't so hard, was it?" Sasha asked.

Then, something ticked inside Darrel. As if he became bolder than he ever did before. He wasn't going to let Sasha win this this time. He gripped his staff and stomped his foot down, causing a tremor on the top of the tower. "NO!" he shouted. Storm clouds began to surround the tower. Lightning and thunder strike from the sides.

He stands toe to toe with Sasha, making her feel a little shocked. "How dare you, Sasha! I thought you were better than this!" "Darrel, I'm-" said Sasha. Darrel raised his finger to Sasha's mouth. "Quiet Sasha. This time, I'm talking. This is not how I remember you," said Darrel. He takes out the photo of both him and Sasha when they were at home. "What happened to the girl who saved me from those bullies? The girl who introduced me to friends? The girl who said she would never hurt any of us?!"

Sasha was at a loss for words. She had never seen this side of Darrel before. Anne was a tad impressed. "What will it take to show you that you do not get to treat us like this?!" Darrel asked. "We are

not your soldiers!" "I'm trying to do what's best for us!" Sasha shouted. "By killing one of our friends?!" Darrel shook his head, realizing that Sasha isn't going to listen to him.

Darrel had to make the toughest decision of his life. He stared into Sasha's eyes and said, "You know what? Fine! Stay with Grime, be his lieutenant, but I don't want to be any part of this! I am done with you!"

Sasha was shocked, "What? What are you-?" "You heard me," said Darrel. "I'm breaking up with you! We Are Done! End. Of Story!" He tightens the grip on his hold of the photo with Sasha, destroying it. Sasha was distraught and angry at the same time. She had just lost Darrel as her boyfriend.

Darrel looks to Anne and then back to Sasha. "Stand your ground, Anne," he said. "Why do you think she would listen to you?" Sasha asked. "Why else," was all Darrel replied with. Until he walked to Anne and kissed her on the lips. Right in front of Sasha. "Because I love her, and she loves me." Anne gained the courage to nod, letting Sasha know that Darrel is telling the truth.

Soon, her shocked expression turned into blind fury. Until she got mud thrown on her face. Sprig and Tint were the ones who threw it. "For someone who's Anne's best friend, you sure don't know her very well," said Tint. "She's brave, she's smart, and most of all, she's not going to be pushed around by a bully like you," said Sprig.

"I think I've had enough of you squeaky toys," said Sasha. She draws her sword to swing it at the two amphibians. Only for Anne and Darrel to stop her in her tracks. "What are you guys doing?" Sasha asked. "Something I should've done a long time ago," said Anne. "Standing up to YOU!" Anne pushes Sasha back, as Darrel casts a light spell hitting her right in the chest.

"Thanks for having our back guys," said Anne. "Spranne against the world," said Sprig. "What would you do without me?" Tint asked Darrel. "I would probably be dead," he replied smiling.

Captain Grime laughed at the irony that Sasha was in. He had frogs defy him. Now Sasha has her own friends standing up to her. "Since you've given me plenty of advice," he said to Sasha. "Now let me give you some: Stamp this out, make them yield. Fail, and nothing will ever be the same." Sasha stands ready to fight, "Not gonna happen."

"This should be fun," said Grime. "My friends! Instead of a messy free for all, I have a splendid idea. How about we settle this, the Toad fashioned way?!" He jumps onto a ledge, and the toads surround Anne and Sasha. "Trial by combat," Grime announced. "If your champion wins, you all go home. No harm, no foul. But if our champion wins, well..." He looks to his flytrap, who snaps vigorously. "Baby's hungry."

"Anne, you're going to have to do this on your own," said Darrel. "I trust that you can do this." "Anne, you know you don't have to do this," said Hop pop. "Yes I do," said Anne. Darrel knew she was right. She would have to stand up to Sasha at some point on her own. Just like him.

The two circle around the area, prepare their fighting stances, glare down at each other. And then, "BEGIN!" Grime announced. The two girls were swinging their swords, giving it their all. "What's gotten into you Anne? You were never like this back home!" said Sasha. "Do you ever stop talking?" Anne asked as she disarmed her.

The crowd gasped as if she had the victory. But Sasha pulls out a dagger, and stuns Anne's stance. She gets her sword back, takes off her cloak and throws it at Anne. Then, Sasha trips her and points her sword at her.

"They're just slimy little frogs, Anne," said Sasha. "They don't MATTER!" Anne looked down and said, "They're not just frogs, they're my FRIENDS!" Anne takes her sword and disarms Sasha of hers and her dagger. Giving her a small scar on her right cheek in the process.

Anne pins her down, and the frogs cheer for her victory. "It's over Sash," said Anne. "You're not going to push us around anymore." Sasha just gives her a defeated glare. "So how about it, big guy?" Anne asked Grime. "We're free right?"

Grime surprisingly said, "Yeah... I don't think so." He uses his tongue to snatch Hop pop from the crowd and dangle him over the flytrap. His action shocked the whole crowd. "Pretty cool huh? This ends now."

Darrel watched as the Captain of the Toad Army decided to go against his word. Suddenly a shine of bright red filled his eyes, his hands, and his staff. He breathed heavily, unable to control his anger at Grime. The storm clouds started flashing more lightning and more thunder rolling.

Darrel gives off a giant yell, giving himself into the storm. He starts to float in the center of swirling winds, making all the frogs, toads, and the salamanders anxious and scared. Darrel's eyes glowed brighter and brighter filling his eyeballs with light. Even his mouth started to fill with light.

Gusts of winds became more visible to the naked eyes of the crowd. Anne and Sasha were shocked to see their friend, who was once quiet and kind to others, show a much darker side. Darrel looks to Grime with dominance and his voice booms with thunder, "LET HIM GO!" Darrel points his staff to Grime, picking up Hop pop and pushing him off the ledge.

The strength of the winds suddenly caused the entire Tower to rip apart, brick by brick. Lightning strikes in random areas of the tower, causing minor explosions. But the damages make the stone bricks crack from below. Some of the large rocks from above squish Grime's flytrap below.

"What's happening to him?!" Anne asked loudly. "It's the power of the Eternal Staff!" Cronaxx shouted. "His anger is channeling into a

dangerous storm that's too big to control!" "He has to calm down!" Tint shouted.

Hop pop orders everyone to get off the roof, and Anne stands up to try and get to Darrel. "DARREL!" Anne shouted. Darrel, who is looking up to the sky, blinked after hearing Anne's voice. "Listen to me! You have to calm down." Darrel looks to Anne, reducing the speed of the winds surrounding him.

"Hop pop is safe. You defeated Captain Grime. Now we can all leave this place, together." Anne grabs Darrel's hand, and Darrel looks down. "It's okay," said Anne. "I'm here. We're all here." Anne hugs Darrel, along with Tint and Cronaxx. Darrel feels the warmth of his friends comforting him, more than the anger flowing through him. Darrel closes his eyes, takes a deep breath, and the storm disappears.

Darrel opens his eyes, revealing them to be normal again. "Thanks guys," said Darrel. Suddenly, the ground began to shake again. The tower started falling apart. "Anne! Darrel!" Sasha cried. The ledge that carried Sasha gave in and she started to fall. Darrel tried to catch her with his powers, but his head started throbbing. So he and Anne decided to try and rescue her the old fashioned way.

Anne dives to Sasha first grabbing her hand. Darrel grabs Anne's legs to make sure she doesn't slip off. With only little energy left, Tint, Cronaxx, then the Plantars came together to try and rescue Sasha. "We've got you Sasha," said Anne. "Everything's going to be totally fine. Just hang on." "We're all in this together," said Darrel. "We've got you guys, no matter what," said Hop pop.

Suddenly, the ledge started to crack behind Tint and Polly. Sasha, seeing the ledge give away too, looks down in sorrow. Then looks up to her friends. With tears in her eyes, all she said was, "Hey Anne, Darrel? Maybe you both are better off without me. Take good care of each other."

Darrel and Anne look in shock, just as Sasha let go of Anne's hand and fell. "NO!" "SASHA!" The group watched helplessly as Sasha fell from the tower. Until Grime leaped in and grabbed her before she could hit the ground.

The toads and frogs evacuated from the tower just in time when more rubble started to fall. When the shaking stopped, all that was left was an abandoned tower barley holding itself together. The toad banner, on top of the tower, ripped off the pole from the wind.

Anne and Darrel look down as they watch an unconscious Sasha being taken away by whatever was left of Grime's army. Anne looked in despair, and Darrel gave off a stern glare at the scarred toad. Grime glared back just as they wandered into the wilderness and disappeared.

Tint and Sprig looked to their human friends, "Anne, Darrel, are you okay?" Sprig asked. Darrel and Anne started to produce tears. "We could use a hug guys," said Darrel. The amphibians hug the crying teenagers after everything that happened to them..

Back in Wartwood, the frogs returned using the toads old party barge. Mrs. Croaker drove them all back home herself. All the frogs were exhausted, that they all returned home.

At the town fountain, Anne, Darrel, and their amphibious friends were resting there. "I know that was hard for you both," said Hop Pop. "But, thank you, for everything." "Hop Pop, you guys are my family," said Anne. "I'd never let anyone hurt you." Darrel placed his arm on her shoulder and said, "Neither would I." The two humans smile and touch foreheads.

"So," said Sprig. "You guys want to get breakfast and come up with some kind of plan to get Anne and Darrel home?" "It's going to be dangerous," said Hop pop. "Perilous even." "Understatement," said Polly. "It may be dangerous," said Tint. "But that's how we know it's a grand adventure." "Fear not for the future, weep not for the past," said Cronaxx.

"Whatever happens next," said Anne. "One thing's for sure, if we're together, I know we'll be alright." Anne and Darrel bring their amphibious friends in for a group hug, and look out over the valley. "Hugging a little tight there Anne," said Hop pop. "No I'm not, she said. The group knows another thing. That what happened yesterday, wasn't the end. This was just the beginning of Anne and Darrel's grand adventure. To journey across the lands of Amphibia, find Sasha and Marcy, and then work together to find a way to get back home.

And that concludes, season one of Loyalty Among Worlds. I know I've jumped multiple episodes from the season. But hopefully, I won't have to jump as much for the second season. Here's to the second half of the season. Let's hope Matt doesn't let us down.

Handy Humans

Darrel was seen in the wilderness, running from an approaching dark mist. He kept running as fast as he could to the Plantar farm. But the farther he ran, the farm kept him from approaching. Darrel looked back and saw the mist approaching him at a faster pace.

Darrel kept running until the mist caught up and enveloped him. Darrel kept running, eyes closed, until he felt himself falling in the smoke. He opens his eyes to see Anne, Sprig, Tint, Cronaxx, Hop pop, and Polly falling with him.

He tried to speak to them, but he couldn't. For some reason, he lost the ability to speak. Then, he watches his friends fade away into dust. He reaches for Anne's hand, but it is too late.

He feels a warm sensation on his back and hears a soft growl. He turns around to see Grime's face, grinning viciously. Then, his face disappears and shows a glowing flaming eye. Then Darrel hears voices repeating, "I'm coming."

Darrel casts a few light spells to fight off the giant eye. But it started multiplying. Eventually, Darrel was surrounded by the eyes. He felt trapped, he couldn't use his magic anymore. The eyes enclosed within Darrel, limiting his ability to move. He screamed his heart out.

But then, Darrel suddenly falls out of his bunker, his head surrounded by covers. He wakes up, removes the covers, and looks at his surroundings. He finds himself back in the basement of the Plantar farm. He breathes in short paces, and sweat drips from his face.

Darrel sighs, relieved that he was just having a bad dream. He hears the door opening, and turns to see Tint at the door. "Hey Darrel! Hop pop is about to..." He spots Darrel laying on the floor and sighs.

"Another one?" Tint asked. Darrel nodded, "Yeah. This time it was glowing red eyes closing in on me." "Man, that fight must've really gotten to you," said Tint. "One, I broke up with Sasha. Two, I nearly destroyed the tower, and us with it. Three, I'm at the point where things are going to be different from now on. All in one day."

"So of course that fight has gotten to me," said Darrel. "But what also got me was that I felt the presence of the music box." Tint perked up by his statement, "What do you mean?" "When I was lost in the bright light, I saw a glimpse of the red gemstone on the music box," said Darrel. "Why would the magic show me that?"

"We should ask Uncle Cronaxx," said Tint. "Maybe he knows something about this." Darrel nodded, "Sounds like a plan. Whether I want to or not, I need to know more about that box." The two get up and make their way upstairs.

In the kitchen, Cronaxx was working on making food for the group's journey. He chops up vegetables and cricket legs and places them on bread. 'There's no better food than when you make them by yourself.' he thought.

As he looks down, he looks at a piece of bread with four holes in the center. Cronaxx suddenly feels a sharp pain and gets an image flashed in his head. The image shows him shielding himself from a bright light. He opens his eyes, returning to reality.

Darrel and Tint enter the kitchen to find Cronaxx setting up their lunches. "Hey Uncle Cronaxx," said Tint. Cronaxx turns around to find the two smiling shyly. "Ah, good morning boys," he said. "Are you all packed up and ready to go?"

The two nodded, "Cronaxx, is it okay if I talk to you for a moment?" "Of course Darrel," he replied. "Tint, would you kindly get our stuff and meet us outside?" Tint nodded and went to get their stuff.

Darrel sat by the kitchen table, feeling uncomfortable. "What's on your mind Darrel?" Cronaxx asked. "It's the incident at Toad Tower,"

replied Darrel. "When I was lost in the magic, I saw the glimpse of one of the gemstones on the music box. I could feel the power inside it, but it felt like that power was controlling me. I tried so hard to fight it, but I kept feeling powerless. Like I was something else, something dangerous."

Cronaxx sighed, "I think it's time I told you something. Something very important about the music box. That box, it's more dangerous than you could ever imagine." Darrel perked himself up. "I still don't remember much about that box, other than I saw a bright light before my memory went blank. But when I was in Hop pop's study, he was going over a book. And that's when we saw the box."

Darrel was shocked, "Something tells me that it does more than teleport humans into Amphibia. What else can it do?" Cronaxx looked at the human with honest eyes, "I wish I could remember. But I do know it's powerful enough and dangerous enough, that Hop pop buried it out in the field."

Darrel grew even more shocked, "Why would he do that?! Why wouldn't he tell us?" "I don't know," replied Cronaxx. "He must have his reasons. But dangerous or not, that box is the key to getting you, and your friends, back home."

Darrel's shock turned to anger, "What should we do?" "We tell Hop pop that I told you that the box is dangerous." Then he gestures his eyes, rolling them. "Both of you." Darrel turns his head to see Tint poking his head out the door. "The box is dangerous?" Tint asked. "Hopediah's book doesn't lie," replied Cronaxx.

"Guess whether Hop pop wants to or not, we're going to find out more about this box," said Darrel. Darrel walks out while Tint and Cronaxx stay behind. "Is he going to be okay Uncle?" Tint asked. "I hope so," said Cronaxx. "That fight on Toad Tower has made him a little more on edge with his magic."

Darrel walks outside to get some fresh air. Then he goes over to Clipper, his pet dragonfly, and feeds him more nutrients. "Things are

going to change buddy," said Darrel. "I can feel it."

He turns his head to find Anne and Sprig on the roof of the house. He smiles genuinely at them, and decides to join them. He climbs onto the roof and greets the two friends. "Hey guys, how's it going?"

Sprig and Anne turn to Darrel, "Hey Darrel," said Sprig. "How'd you sleep?" "Still not very well," replied Darrel. He sits next to Anne, who places her hand on his shoulder. "Another nightmare?" she asked. Darrel nodded.

"Hey look on the bright side guys," said Sprig. "Spring is finally here. New season, new possibilities." "We can still blossom into our best selves," Anne said while smiling. "Yeah, I suppose we can," said Darrel.

"So you guys are feeling better after the whole Sasha incident?" Sprig asked. Darrel and Anne perked in fear and recalled everything that happened to them on Toad Tower. "Yep, totally fine," said Anne. "I'm not," said Darrel, flatly. "I'm still shook up with what I unleashed. I almost destroyed you guys. It's why I didn't sleep well."

"Darrel, that wasn't your fault," said Sprig. "Still, a part of me thinks it was," said Darrel. "I had so much power in that staff, and I couldn't control what I unleashed. But you guys are what help keep my powers in check."

Anne and Darrel hug it out just as Hop pop and Polly return with a wagon in tow with Bessie. The three friends climb down from the roof to get a better look. Tint and Cronaxx exit the house to see as well. "Woah, Hop pop. What is this thing?" Sprig asked. "Impressive isn't it," said Hop pop. "This here's an all-terrain, custom-modeled, family wagon. Calling it the Fwagon."

Some of the group chuckled while others were deadpanned with the name. "Why do we need a wagon?" Darrel asked. "Fwagon," Hop pop corrected. "I won't call it that," said Darrel. "Neither will I," said

Anne. "Well with the snow melted and the mountain pass open, we can finally travel outside the valley," said Hop pop. "To Newtopia."

Sprig, and Tint's eyes sparkled with excitement. Cronaxx nodded his head in acceptance. Darrel and Anne were happy, but confused. "What's in Newtopia?" Anne asked.

Inside the wagon, Hop pop and Cronaxx pull out the map of Amphibia. Cronaxx points at the center of the map, "It's the heart of all Amphibia. A metropolis of ancient knowledge, run by the wisest of newts. I've seen many of them on my journeys. If anyone can help you get home, it's them."

Darrel and Anne smile, "So like, this could be our actual ticket home?" Darrel asked. "But not only that," said Anne. She pulls out a photo of her and her friends, Sasha and Marcy. "Maybe on the road, we'll find Marcy."

"You betcha," said Hop pop. "Everyone, pack your bags. We leave tonight." The group cheers, and the Plantars prepare for the trip.

Darrel takes the salamanders bags and his bags and straps them onto Clipper's back. "I know this is going to feel heavy, boy," said Darrel. "But once we arrive in Newtopia, I'll get them off of you."

Clipper clipped his teeth together, then looked up at a flock of his kind. He started to shrug, softly knocking off some of the bags. Darrel groomed his face to help him regain focus. "It's okay, buddy. We'll make some stops along the way."

He looks over to Hop pop who gives Anne the spare key to the house. He overhears that Chuck has been hired to safeguard the house while they're away. "An empty house is vulnerable, kids," said Hop pop. "Needs protectin'. Not to mention the crops, the very soul of our farm. Left alone to face wildfires, locusts, tornadoes, flaming locust tornadoes. Anyway here you go." Hop pop gives Anne the key.

Darrel and Anne express a hint of guilt. "Didn't realize you guys are risking so much to help us," said Anne. "Hey, he may just be exaggerating," said Tint. However, a flaming locust tornado came by and destroyed a windmill.

As the Plantars head inside to pack up their stuff, and the salamanders get Clipper set up, Darrel looks over Anne's shoulder to see a guilt ridden face. "Anne, are you okay?" Darrel asked. "No," she replied. "They're leaving their home unguarded, because of me."

Darrel takes Anne's hand and says, "It's okay. It's not only because of you. It's because of us. Besides, they're leaving the house in good hands."

Then the two humans see a snail driven by a tough looking frog. "Is that you Chuck?" Darrel asked. "No, I'm Dave," said the frog. "That's Chuck." He points to the taxi revealing a frog with a straw hat covering his eyes. "I grow Tulips," said Chuck.

The two humans greet the frog, just as he was ambushed by four flying scorpions. Anne felt distraught, "There's no way Chuck can handle this job. The house is doomed and it's all my fault."

Darrel, seeing Anne upset, thought of an idea to help her conscience. He reaches his arm out to his staff, and the staff flies into his hand. "Unless," said Darrel. "I can give the house a small security system."

He takes the key from Anne and blasts the scorpions away with his magic. He gives the key to Chuck and tells him to take a breather. "Until you get your strength back, we'll fortify the house for you to safeguard." Chuck smiles as he falls down, exhausted.

"Come on Anne," said Darrel. "We've got some fortifying to do." Anne smiles at his determination and the two head into town for supplies. They bought tools, wood, and some of Loggle's special concoction of glowing glop.

They return to the farm and begin setting up barbed wire fences, large mouse traps, spiked rooftops, and enchanted shields to protect the house from the elements. Anne starts to add the glowing glop to the Plantar's crops. But to save time, she kicks the barrel all over the field. Darrel looks over with unease. "That's not going to end well."

The salamanders returned preparing Clipper on their journey. They look over the whole farm to see the defenses set up. "Woah," said Tint. "What's going on? Seems like Chuck was preparing for war." "Me and Anne may have upgraded the defenses a little bit," said Darrel. "Chuck's just taking a breather from getting beaten up by flying scorpions." Darrel points over to where Chuck is still taking his time.

The Plantars came out to see the work done, and they were impressed as well. Except for Sprig, because he spent most of his time picking out the proper slingshot for his quest. Darrel and Anne smirked while wiggling fingers with each other to celebrate a job well done.

Then all of a sudden, they feel the ground starting to shake. They look over to the vegetables to see the crops come to life and ooze out Loggle's miracle glop. "Uh oh," said Darrel.

The vegetables pop out of the ground and begin to act like monsters. They surrounded the group as they backed to the door. Cronaxx and Tint prepare to use fire magic against them, but they end up getting grabbed by vines.

"Tint! Cronaxx!" Darrel cried. "Alright everyone, action time!" Anne yelled. The humans and the frogs went in an attacking stance and fought against the vegetable monsters.

Darrel uses his flame spell to burn away an eggplant monster. Anne slashes her way through a turnip. Hop pop grates on a potato, yelling "Hash Browns!" Sprig takes his trusty slingshot and uses pebbles to slice the vines, grabbing Tint and Cronaxx.

"Thanks Sprig," said Tint. The two high fived in celebration. "No problem," said Sprig. "Guess we did it," said Darrel. "And the house is undamaged," said Anne.

Suddenly, the ground started shaking again. The sliced vegetables started to pull themselves together to make a giant colossal vegetable monster. It growls into the horizon and faces the group in anger.

The monster punches the amphibians, leaving Darrel and Anne in defensive stances. As the monster approaches, it gets caught in one of Anne's giant mouse traps. Then, it starts leaning towards the house. The two humans know what's going to happen next. But before they could do anything, the monster fell, destroying the heavily fortified house in the process.

Anne and Darrel couldn't believe it, the house they took shelter in was destroyed. They looked down in sorrow as the vegetable monster got back up and prepared to step on them. The monster slammed its foot, just as Anne and Darrel dodged slightly away.

"Oh you just made a big mistake buddy," Anne said in a vicious glare. The two humans looked up in a fit of rage, and their eyes glowed blue and red for just a second.

The two humans stood hand in hand as they raced their way up to the head of the monster. Darrel casts another fire spell setting Anne's sword and tennis racket on fire. Then, Anne proceeds to slay the monster and blow it up in a barrage of smoke.

The two come out victorious with turnips and eggplant in their mouths. "Wow! That was amazing," said Sprig. "You saved our tails!" said Polly. "I have never seen such excellent teamwork like that before," said Cronaxx.

Darrel and Anne smiled, only to look at the house again in despair. "Hey, the important thing is that we're all okay," said Hop pop. "Yeah," said Darrel. "But it was also our fault in the first place."

The group stood in a bit of shock. "When Darrel gave the key to Chuck we told him to relax while we fortified the house," said Anne. "We may have also spread some of Loggles magic glop on the crops. We just wanted the house to be safe while you guys were taking this big trip for us.

The amphibians look with small smiles on their faces. "Kids, we're not taking this trip for you," said Hop pop. "We're taking it with you." "Besides, a wizard's journey is always on the road," said Tint. "We've got your back no matter what," said Sprig.

"So, can we hold off on Newtopia while we fix the house?" Anne asked. "Who said we need to hold off?" Cronaxx asked as he looked at Darrel and Tint. He nods at them and the two look at each other with smiles.

The three wizards get in position and magically wave their hands. Their magical auras surround the house, the farm, and the stable, and they restore them back to normal. Near the end of the renovations, Chuck appeared and helped remodel the house back to its less defensive look. "I grow tulips."

Anne and the Plantars were impressed, "Hoopa da boopa," Darrel swung his staff and poses. "With the farm back to its old self, I think it's for the best that Chuck house sits until we return." The group nod in agreement and continue packing the wagon and Clipper.

After a while, the group finishes packing up for the journey. "Alright, gang. It's a two week journey to Newtopia. So we better get going." said Hop pop. Sprig and Polly hop cheerfully into the wagon.

Darrel groomed Clipper's head, "Are you ready to go boy?" Clipper looks to the colony of dragonflies flying away, then looks at Darrel. He clips his teeth together signaling that he's ready. Darrel scratches his head and goes over to Anne and the others.

"Hey Hop pop," said Anne. "I was thinking... wouldn't it be a good idea to bring the music box with us on the trip?" Hop pop perks at

Anne with a startling face. "Oh, uh..." "No, no, no. It'll be safe with my contacts for the time being." "Alright HP, I trust your judgement," said Anne as she walked into the wagon.

Darrel looks down at Hop pop, "She may not trust you again if she finds out." Hop pop jumps and turns around. "What are you talking about?" he asked. "I know what you did with the box. Cronaxx told me."

Cronaxx and Tint walk over to Darrel's side with serious glares. "You didn't think you could keep him in the dark?" Tint asked. "We are wizards, we know more than the average amphibian." "Hop pop," said Cronaxx. "Darrel felt the presence of one of the gemstones on the box. Like it or not, he knows that the box is dangerous."

Darrel takes a knee to Hop pop. "Hop pop, if you know that the box is dangerous then you have to tell us. Trying to hide the truth will only make things worse." "Okay," said Hop pop. "I buried the box, but it's more complicated to explain everything. I can't risk the lives of my grandkids knowing how dangerous it is. Please, just keep this quiet until I can think of something." Darrel nods, "Okay then, but I'm giving you until we return to Wartwood. For it is better to know now and be disappointed, than to never know and always wonder."

Darrel and the Salamanders leave Hop pop to think about what they said. He takes a deep breath and climbs up to the reins of the wagon. "Well, let's get this fwagon on the road!" he announced. Darrel taps Clipper with his foot, signaling him to take off. "We're ready, Hop pop! Hit 'em up! Move 'em out!" "No turning back now!" Cronaxx announced.

As they begin their journey, Darrel feels a lump in his back pocket. He takes it out and it reveals to be the crumbled photo of him and Sasha. He reflects on what happened between him and his now ex-girlfriend. He looks down to the photo with guilt, shedding a tear.

Tint takes notice and starts to talk to him, "Hey, are you sure you're okay Darrel?" Darrel shook his head, "I'm still overwhelmed with

what happened. I said some things like I went too far, but she had to hear how angry I was. I may have broken up with Sasha, but that doesn't mean I don't care about her anymore." Tint and Cronaxx listened to the distraught human. "Sasha needs to realize that she's not the only one in this situation. Not her, not Anne, not me, and not Marcy. All of us. That's why we need to find them all, so we can work together on how to get back home."

Tint takes his little speech to heart and pats his back. "And we'll be there to help guide you on your way," he said. "I promise." Cronaxx nodded in agreement. "We said we were going to help you, and we still are."

Darrel smiled and said, "Thanks you guys." He turns his head out to the road and smiles with determination. "Now let's get rolling. Next stop: Newtopia!" Darrel, the Salamanders, Anne, and the Plantars begin their first steps towards an adventure outside the valley.

Hey guys, I'm back! Sorry I took so long. I just wanted to see the rest of the season before I include my story in the series. I hope you all understand. Now that the situation's out of the way, we return with Loyalty Among Worlds. We now get to the second stage of Darrel Loyality's journey. Along with Anne, and their amphibious friends.

Fort in the Road

Amphibia

Chapter 25 - Fort in the Road

The group began their journey by leaving the Plantar farms and the city of Wartwood. They travel to the edge of the valley and cross the chasm where there used to be ice and snow blocking the path. Sprig was super excited about crossing the edge of the valley, he couldn't wait to see what comes next.

Anne and Darrel were much calmer, considering they don't know what to expect when they reach the other side. But then, they gazed in amazement when they saw the lands beyond Wartwood. The group, sans Hop pop and Cronaxx, were speechless.

"It's amazing, it's majestic, it's hurting my eyes," said Anne as she started rubbing them. "It's better than I could've dreamed," said Sprig. "Take a good long look guys," said Darrel. "Who knows if we're going to see anything else as beautiful as this."

Suddenly, Clipper started tha shake again. A little more violently this time, some of the salamanders' stuff fell off and onto the wagon. "Woah, are you alright Clipper?" Tint asked.

Cronaxx glared at the dragonfly's attitude. He grew curious as to what he's doing, but decided to wait it out for a while.

"Is Clipper doing okay?" Polly asked. "I don't know," said Darrel. "He's been acting up like this since we started leaving." "Well, maybe he's just edgy to get out there," said Sprig. "Full speed ahead, Hop pop! Keep driving and never look back!"

However, Hop pop had other thoughts. "Now that we're out of the valley, things can get dangerous fast. So..." The group enters the

wagon and Hop pop plops down another rule book. "From now on we're going to follow Hop pop's rules of the road. By me, Hop pop."

The kids groan in boredom, "It was challenging enough with Bessie's life story," said Darrel. "But now this?" "Do you kids have any problems with books?" Hop pop asked. "Why without books..." "Our civilization will crumble into nothingness," said the kids.

After a sample of one of Hop pop's rules, the kids find it difficult to go along with the trip. "Not much we can do about Hop pop's rules," said Darrel. "My mom and dad always set me straight with their rules. But I know never to go against them." "There was one time, my parents and I went to the Grand Canyon, and we didn't stop for anything," said Anne.

"Well if anyone can figure out how to have fun with these rules, it's us," said Sprig. The kids nod and cheer, "Newtopia! Here we come!" But their cheer was interrupted, "Road rule number 29: No Shouting! Marauders will follow the sound and steal your skin" said Hop pop.

Looking back to Clipper, Darrel got to thinking, and came up with an idea. "You know, some of Hop pop's rules won't apply if we ride on Clipper." The kids smirk and climb on Clipper's back. "What's going on?" Hop pop asked. "If all your rules apply to your wagon, then not all of them apply to my dragonfly," said Darrel with a smirk.

Darrel takes Clipper up in the air a bit more, but follows Hop pop's speed of the wagon. "So, what should we do?" Tint asked. "I might have something to pass the time," said Darrel. He pats on Clippers head three times and starts to sing.

(Rawhide by Frankie Laine)

Darrel:

Rawhide

Keep rollin', rollin', rollin'

Though the streams are swollen

Keep them dogies rollin', rawhide

Through rain and wind and weather

Hell bent for leather

Wishin' my gal was by my side

All the things I'm missin'

Good vittles, love and kissin'

Are waiting at the end of my ride

Anne and Darrel:

Move 'em on, head 'em up

Head 'em up, move 'em on

Move 'em on, head 'em up, rawhide

Cut 'em out, ride 'em in

Ride 'em in, cut 'em out

Cut 'em out, ride 'em in, rawhide

Anne:

Keep movin', movin', movin'

Though they're disapprovin'

Keep them dogies movin', rawhide

Don't try to understand 'em
Just rope 'em, throw, and brand 'em
Soon we'll be livin' high and wide
My heart's calculatin'
My true love will be waitin'
Be waitin' at the end of my ride

The Kids:

Move 'em on, head 'em up
Head 'em up, move 'em on
Move 'em on, head 'em up, rawhide
Cut 'em out, ride 'em in
Ride 'em in, cut 'em out
Cut 'em out, ride 'em in, rawhide

Rawhide

"Alright! Enough!" Hop pop cried. "Everyone get off Clipper and get back in the wagon! Cronaxx, keep riding him for the time being. You kids just lost your singing privileges." All the kids groan and they climb back down into the wagon.

The group continued their journey slowly but surely. Sprig was fascinated by the landmarks they constantly pass, but Hop pop always said no to them. Sprig, Tint, Anne, and Darrel plump inside the wagon. "I swear to frog," said Sprig. "If one more cool and exciting thing passes us by-"

"Heads up, gang," said Hop pop. "Cause we're about to come up to the Ruins of Despair." The four peek out the window to see frog-like structures pop out from the ground. "Woah," they said. "What are those weird structures, Cronaxx?" Darrel asked. "No one else knows, Darrel. They've been here long before history was written," he replied.

"Do you know them?" Tint asked. Cronaxx squints his eyes and concentrates on his surroundings. However, it wasn't enough. "Probably, but it was a long time ago. Maybe when I was only a young hatchling."

"It's a mystery best left unsolved as far as I'm concerned," said Hop pop. Sprig groans, "If I don't go out there and at least touch it, I'll regret it for the rest of my life." Darrel looks up to see Clipper shaking little by little, and comes up with an idea.

He climbs up and glances at Clipper. "Hey Hop pop," he points to his dragonfly. "Clipper doesn't look like he can handle flying at a slow pace. I think we need to give him a rest. Plus, Anne's not feeling good, so we need to stop."

"Dang it, how do humans cope with such unreliable innards?" Hop pop stops the wagon and says, "Just let me know when we can start moving again." Darrel smiled, "Won't be too long."

Just as Clipper lands beside the wagon, Darrel, Tint, Anne, and Sprig bail out of the wagon and run to the ruins. Hop pop spots them and yells at them to come back.

The four reach one of the ruins as fast as they could before Hop pop could catch them. "Okay guys," said Anne. "Pretty sure Hop pop's on to us." She takes out her phone, "So let's take some quick selfies and get out of here."

"Good enough for me," said Tint. The four get into a selfie pose, just as Sprig accidentally opens the door to one of the ruins. Sprig and Tint fall into the door and Anne and Darrel slide down behind them.

The four reach the bottom and look around, they find the place to be more technologically advanced than usual. "This is impossible," said Darrel. "Yeah," said Anne. "I thought you guys were pastoral or whatever."

"I'm gonna touch everything!" said Sprig. "Woah, hold on Sprig," said Tint. "We don't know what this stuff can do." Sprig didn't listen to him, and just kept touching things. "There's so much to see."

"Sprig is eager I'll give him that," said Darrel as he placed his shoulder around Anne. Anne grinned, "I did a good thing."

Then, Hop pop slid down the pathway. Darrel sighed and smiled, "We're in trouble." "Do you four realize how many rules you just broke?!" Hop pop asked in a sour tone. "17, 29, 36, 55!"

Sprig keeps hopping on a strange contraption and suddenly sees a lever. He showed off an eager face and wanted to pull it. "Don't you dare," said Hop pop. "Rule #68: Never, ever, pull a lever."

Eager to show Hop pop that some rules are meant to be broken, Sprig pulls down the lever. His actions cause the entire room to turn on. "Startup engaged," said the machine. "Woah," said Tint. "This isn't like any magic I've ever seen." "Of course it isn't," said Darrel. "It's technology." "Not sure how I feel about that," said Sprig.

"Better get down from there," said Tint. "Assembly line activated. Routine Protocol engaged," said the computer. "Assembly line?" Anne asked.

Anne and Darrel turn around and see a conveyor belt moving parts across the room. "Looks like a factory of some kind," said Darrel. "Only question is: What does it make?"

"Additional materials required," said the computer. "Please place them on the glowing access point." "Glowing what now?" Hop pop looks down as the floor he stands on begins to glow.

Suddenly a couple of braces secure Hop pop's legs and drag him down the assembly line. The group tries to shut down the process, only to make things worse. Before they could get caught in any more pickles, Sprig shoves the rule book into a compartment slot, causing the machine to rumble.

The five escaped just as the factory exploded. The group may be safe from the factory, but not from Hop pop. "I know," said Tint. "We should've followed your rules." "You think?" Hop pop exclaimed. "You guys should be more like Polly and Cronaxx. I told them to stay put and look where they are."

The five look to see the area empty, "Where did they go?" Tint asked. Suddenly, Polly is seen with Bessie and the wagon, performing like they were on a dirt bike rally. "Bessie made me do it," said Polly.

Suddenly, Cronaxx and Clipper were seen zooming around the group. "Sorry, Darrel," said Cronaxx. "Clipper saw a group of dragonflies, and started following them." "It's okay," said Darrel. "From now on, we stay on course. Following the rules."

The kids slump and return to the wagon. Hop pop looks at how miserable he's making them and feels guilty. "Hang on kids, maybe this only happened because I was being too strict with you. We've never taken a trip like this and I just wanted it to go smoothly. So what do you say we set aside the rules for a bit and make a stop or two?"

The kids smile with glee, "Can we stop at the Hills of Impalement?" Sprig asked. "I've got something else in mind," said Hop pop.

The group makes a stop for ice cream, and along the way question what was being made in the underground factory. "I guess we'll never know what they're making," said Tint. "Some secrets are best left hidden," said Cronaxx.

Later in the day, Clipper spots another flock of dragonflies and shakes profusely. Darrel and the salamanders were a tad uncomfortable, that they were forced to land.

Darrel looks to Clipper as the rest of the group stops as well. "Is Clipper okay?" Sprig asked. "I don't know," replied Darrel. "This never happened before." "I think I know what's the problem," said Cronaxx.

Darrel looks to the elderly salamander, "He's at that point in life where he has to find a mate." Darrel looks to the dragonflies and to Clipper. "So that explains why you get so edgy. You want to find a mate."

Cronaxx looks to the two in sorrow, "That means we have to let him go." The group looked at Cronaxx with surprised looks. "Darrel, he can't find a mate and come with us at the same time. Clipper came with us for so long. Now it's time to let him make his own decisions."

Darrel looks at Cronaxx with a sad face, then turns to Clipper who's looking up at the flock of dragonflies. Darrel starts to cry silently, just as Anne puts her hand on his shoulder, "You going to be okay, Darrel?" Darrel turns to Anne and slowly nods. "Yeah, just let me say goodbye."

Clipper looks down at Darrel and gives him a nudge. Darrel pats on his head and takes a deep breath. "You're right buddy. It's time. I was so focused on keeping our group together, I almost forgot about what you needed. You looked after me since I hatched you. Now it's time for you to look after yourself."

Darrel takes off Clipper's saddle and Clipper nuzzles his head on Darrel as if he was trying to hug him. The group looks over with a few tears coming out of their eyes. "Goodbye Clipper," whispered Darrel. "Go."

Darrel stands clear as Clipper begins to flap his insect wings and fly off to the dragonfly flock. Darrel looks to his dragonfly friend with

pride, and smiles at his departure. Anne holds his hand, and he turns to her. "He's going to be okay," said Anne. "I know," said Darrel. "I raised him."

"Come on gang," said Hop pop. "We've still got a lot of ground to cover before we reach Newtopia." Darrel, the salamanders, Anne, Sprig, and Polly enter the wagon and continue their journey.

I hope you all enjoyed the season finale. I sure did, it had highs and lows, and lots of heart jerking scenes. Now that that's over, I'll finally get back on track on my fanfiction story before the third season begins.

The Ballad of Hopediah and Darrel

Chapter 26 - The Ballad of Hopediah and Darrel

The group continue their journey to Newtopia, a dragonfly down. Ever since Clipper left, Darrel has been feeling sad letting him go. But he knew he did the right thing. Anne did as much as she could for him, and so did Tint.

Then one day, Hop pop took the reins while Darrel was sitting next to him. He was still under the weather, but he didn't want to bring anyone down. Suddenly, Hop pop began to hear the wheels move at a bumpy pace. The pans inside the wagon hitting against each other. He began to whistle, which caught Darrel's attention.

(On the Open Road - Original song from A Goofy Movie)

Do ya need a break from modern livin'?

Do ya long to shed your weary load?

If your nerves are raw

And your brain is fried

Just grab a friend and take a ride

Together upon the open road

C'mon, Darrel! Give it a go!

Darrel:

All in all, I'd rather perform magic

All in all, I'd rather fight a toad

And the old man drives like such a snail

That I'm about to make my bail

Directly upon the road

Sprig:

There's nothin' can upset me

'Cause now we're on our way

Our trusty map will guide us straight and true

Anne:

Oh Sasha, please forgive us

We'll find you again someday

Though we may be in traction when we do

Hop pop and Sprig:

Me and Fam relaxin' like the old days

It's cooler than acid spit and acne

In a family-buddy kind of mode

I'm so hype

I think I may explode

When I see our desti, I could cry

Ya know, that's funny

So could I

Just bein' out on the open road

(Darrel, finally smiling again, creates an illusion of an ordinary freeway from Earth)

Female Country Singers:

Howdy, boys

Is this the way to Nashville?

Tow truck driver:

Watch it, Mac!

Or you'll be gettin' towed

Prisoner:

I'm in no hurry to arrive

'Cause I'll be turnin' sixty-five

The next time I see the open road

Small man and wife:

Just a week of rest and relaxation

Yeah!

Small Man:

And the odd romantic episode

Cronaxx:

Very odd!

Tint:

It's the Newtop-eye-ay or bust

Polly and Anne:

Look out, you dirtbags

Eat our dust

From now on, we own the open road!

Just me and my whole family

My pipsqueak pioneers

Their wagon ventures forever westward ho

Nuns and Hop pop:

Yeehaw!

Darrel:

Could someone call a taxi

And get us outta here

To Beverly Hills 9-0-2-1-0

Everyone:

Every day another new adventure

Every mile another new zip code

And the cares we had are gone for good

Darrel & Anne:

And we'd go with them if we could

Everyone:

I've got no strings on me

I'm feelin' fancy-free

How wonderful to be

On the open road!

Darrel stops the illusion just as they nearly arrive at another town. Anne turns to her boyfriend who is smiling once again. "Feeling better?" Anne asked. Darrel nodded, "Yep. I'm still going to miss Clipper, but that's not going to stop us." Anne smiles and kisses him on the cheek. "I'm proud of you."

The team continues their journey by crossing the desert regions of Amphibia. Sprig plucked his fiddle to pass the time and Anne looked over her pictures. She comes across a picture of the crumbled Toad Tower, which got her confused.

"I don't remember taking this photo of Toad Tower," she said. "Oh, that was me," said Polly. "I wanted a little reminder of how we messed those toads up." Hop pop chuckled, "We sure did."

"You know, me and Sprig were working on a song about the battle," said Tint. "Am I in it?" Hop pop asked. "It's a work in progress so maybe," said Sprig. The two prepare to play their song as Sprig begins to sing.

There was a little frog who stood for revolution. / The toads didn't like that, so they tried to execute him. / But thankfully, Anne and Darrel stepped up to take the tower. And they saved Hop Pop, who... Mostly hid and cowered. And cowered and cowered and cowered and cowered and cowered and cowered and cowered and cowered.

"Alright that's enough," said Hop pop, annoyed. Anne and Polly cheered, " Great song dude." "Yeah that was awesome." Darrel

shrugged, "It's a good start, but could do less about the cowering."
"Hey, I did not cower!" Hop pop stated. "Remember the time I courageously ran for mayor? Or when I stood up to those nasty tax collectors?"

"Eh, boring," said Anne and Polly. "We've all been there Hop pop," said Darrel. "But the attention felt like it was drawn to us."
"Audiences want clear stakes Hop pop," said Sprig. "And action."
The kids pose in action stances.

Hop pop groans in disappointment, "Feels like just yesterday, people thought I was a revolutionary hero." "It doesn't matter what other people think about what you did," said Cronaxx. "What matters is what you did and that should be enough."

"Suddenly, Hop pop spots a sign that says 'Bittyburg.' "Heads up gang! Looks like we're about to stop at our first town." "Our first town outside of Wartwood, Anne," said Darrel. "I wonder what it'll be like," she said. "Will the frogs be friendly? Will they have a bathroom?!"

"Don't get too excited you two," said Cronaxx. "Bittyburg is just your average small town." "Have you been there before Uncle?" Tint asked. "Only a couple times," he replied.

The group arrives in Bittyburg, surprising Anne and Darrel with the fact that it is an actual small town. Compared to the group's size, they tower over the citizens. Darrel was the most fascinated. "This is amazing!" He exclaimed. "A small western town? I've always wanted to be a cowboy when I was a kid."

That's when Darrel came up with an idea. He takes his staff and enters the wagon. After a puff of magical smoke, Darrel walks back out grabbing the group's attention. He is shown with brown cowboy boots with bronze spurs, and tan long pants with an amphibian belt buckle. Around his waist are two sacks of magic powder, and across his chest is a set of magic potions. He is also wearing dark brown gloves and a dark cowboy hat with holes to stick his twigs out and

two dragonfly wings on the strap of the hat. His face is shown with a toothpick in his mouth and short hairs across his jaw.

Anne looks to Darrel with awe. "Ohh, Darrel you're rockin' this cowboy look." "What can I say? I love the wild west," said Darrel. Anne blushes at his western accent and the two explore the town, hand in hand.

Suddenly, Darrel and Hop pop hear a ruckus in the town. They find the townsfolk being bullied by a large toad with an eyepatch over its scar. Then, he kicks one of them across town. Anne catches him and sets him down. "Those poor bitties," said Anne. "Someone should do something," said Sprig.

Darrel looks at the toad and gives off his stern look. He didn't like seeing people get bullied, especially when they're just a fraction of the toad's size. So he decided to take a stand.

"Sprig, Tint, get your instruments ready," said Hop pop. "You may have a song to write." Darrel approaches the toad along with Hop pop, who follows him from behind.

Darrel stomps on the ground grabbing the toad's attention. "Why don't you pick on someone your own size, toad?" "My name is Judro Hasselback," said the toad. "And this here's my town. Who in the heck are you two?"

"Names Darrel Loyallitat, and I'm here to tell you to leave those bitties alone." "Or I, Hopediah Plantar, am going to teach you some manners," said Hop pop. Darrel was startled at first, but smiled when he croaked the toad down to the ground.

Hop pop pushed him all the way out of town, and Darrel threw a handful of pepper in his face. "You'll pay for... ACHOO! This," said Judro. "Not one more bitty is paying you squat," said Darrel. "Now get the heck out of their town." Judro leaves, and the town feels blessed with their heroism.

"Wow, you guys were impressive," said Anne. "Gotta say Darrel, I'm starting to like this western side of you." "I'm just tryin' to do the right thing," said Darrel. "Judro was just being a blowhard," said Hop pop. "Not like those tax toads I stood up to."

The bitties were so impressed with Hop pop that they wanted to hear his story. For the next three hours, Hop pop told his story about toad tower, and the group watched from behind the crowd. Anne and Darrel smiled at his exaggerations, calling it marketing. However, Cronaxx knew that his glory wouldn't last long.

"Hopediah Plantar and Darrel Loyalityat!" Judro called out. The two turn to see Judro with a gang of amphibians behind him. "You two done asked for it, so here it comes. This here's the Hasselback Gang!"

Judro introduces his brother Heathro, half sister Ruth, uncle Talbert. And his leader, his mama. Armed with a rolling pin, Mama Hasselback slammed it down, shaking the town. "You the frog and monster that dared throw my Judro out of town?"

Darrel stood up standing toe to toe with Mama Hasselback. "That's right, Ma'am. But your son had it comin'." "And Hop pop is going to run you all out of town too," said Baily, the little bitty. Hop pop was a bit scared, considering he exaggerated his whole story.

"Now this I gotta see," said Mama Hasselback. She takes a seat and let's Hop pop try to push her around. She tires him out, then hits him on the head with her rolling pin. "Alright, my turn," said Darrel. But just as he was about to fight them, he turns around to see his friends get tongue tied with the gang. Then, he gets blinded by Ruth's powder, which happens to be sand.

"Looks like y'all chose the wrong frog," said Mama. "Word of advice folks: Don't believe in everything you're told about heroes. After all, they don't exist."

Darrel rubbed his eyes, regaining some of his eyesight, and said, "Maybe, but that doesn't mean I can't step up and do the right thing." The rest of the Hasselback gang push the group out of town and Mama warns them not to return. Darrel tries to step up again, but Hop pop told him not to, because he let the townsfolk down with his stories. Darrel told Hop pop it wasn't right, but he wouldn't listen. He orders him to get in the wagon.

As they left the village, the group was stunned with Hop pop's decision. Sprig and Tint try to play something, but Cronaxx, magically teleports their instruments in the wagon. "I'm not proud of what happened back there," said Hop pop. "Then why are we leaving?" Tint asked. "Being a hero isn't about songs and glory, it's about stepping up and doing the right thing."

Hop pop suddenly realizes Tint was right, and stops the wagon. "No hero can walk out of their own story," said Darrel. "Let's go back," said Cronaxx. "I have a plan," said Darrel.

Back at Bittyburg, the little bitties were pleasing the Hasselback gang by offering them money and special treatment. Then, the town hears a harmonica playing in the sunset. They find Hop pop and Darrel standing in the sunset.

"Hasselback gang, we're calling you out," said Darrel. "Look who decided to show their ugly formed faces again," said Mama. "Ya back for more punishment?" "We're back to do what's right," said Hop pop. "Now get you and your family out of their town, or stay and face justice."

The sunset made the showdown feel very intense. It even made Darrel squeal on the inside. How he dreamed of western life like this. "Get 'em," said Mama. Judro charges at Hop pop, but gets smacked by his tongue. Mama snapped her fingers, and Heathro and Talbert charged at the two. Darrel stops them with a whack of his staff and casts a paralysis spell on them.

The rest of the gang watch from the top of a cliff, helping Hop pop get the advantage he needs to stop them. Tint and Sprig shoot rocks, hitting the Hasselback gang. After Darrel turns Ruth's legs into stone, the two approach Mama as she backs up slowly. The townsfolk supported their help and cheered them on.

"End of the line Mama," said Hop pop. Just as he was about to hit her with his tongue, she dodged his hit and grabbed the rock that was aimed at her head. But just as she grinned, Darrel calls out a time spell, slowing down time. He charges at Mama and sweeps her off her feet with his staff.

Just as the Hasselback gang got back up, they spotted Mama being head locked by Darrel. "Hasselbacks! Surrender now, and Mama won't get hurt." "This is what happens when you bully people Mama," said Hop pop. "Others must stand up to those who can't fight for themselves. And right now standing up to you bullies is the right thing to-"

Before he could finish off his sentence, Hop pop was hit by Mama's tongue and was pushed back into garbage. Suddenly, the bitties started getting aggressive and prepared to fight for Hop pop. Seeing how aggressive they are, Darrel backed off and let go of Mama.

Soon the group watched in horror as the bitties go nuts on the Hasselback gang and immediately depart. Anne looked to Darrel who instantly donned off his western gear. "Hey Darrel, are you okay?" Darrel smiled, "Are you kidding me? I got to live out my fantasy of being in the Old West, this is the happiest day of my life!"

Anne smiled and took Darrel's hand. "But there's only one last thing that could make this dream come true," said Darrel. "What's that?" Anne asked. "The sunset shot. Sprig, Tint, give us one final ballad."

Sprig and Tint smile and take out their instruments, "*Oh, Hop Pop and Darrel stood their ground / In hopes they'd save the day / But then the townsfolk Went berserk / And so we ran away.*" As the wagon rode off into the sunset, Bessie neighed loud and proud.

Then, Darrel took his hat and covered his and Anne's face as the two kissed.

Meanwhile, from the other side of Bittyburg, a mysterious device crushed an old skeleton and ventured off into the sunset. In the same direction the group was going.

Hunting Season

Chapter 27 - Hunting Season

The group gives Bessie a break from pulling the wagon by making a campsite in the woods. Sprig and Tint were setting up the tents, Polly and Anne were getting a picnic table set up, and Darrel was showing Cronaxx how bug spray works.

"But having bugs fly around us is a good thing," said Cronaxx. "It's like an Amphibian's buffet." Darrel was just about to say something until he smelled grub from Hop pop's cauldron. "Speaking of buffet," said Darrel. "I think Hop pop's finished with our food."

"Okay, dinner's ready," said Hop pop. The group gathered around, excited to eat. "Now hold on to your bugs," said Hop pop. He removes the dome, only to reveal one twig. "How's that food?" Tint asked.

"Only because I didn't tell you what the surprise is," said Hop pop. The kids get excited, waiting for Hop pop's answer. "Alright there's no surprise," he responded.

The kids groan in disappointment. "Sorry kids, this journey's been longer than expected and we're out of food," said Hop pop. Tint's stomach growls, and so does Darrel's. "Looks like our stomachs are singing a chorus," said Darrel. "It's the agony wail."

Anne groans, "This is all my fault. I dragged you guys out here to figure out how to get me home, and now we're all going to starve to death." The group just laughed, "It's not the end of the world, Anne," said Cronaxx. "We're surrounded by nature where nourishment can be provided."

"Cronaxx is right," said Sprig. "This'll give us the chance to find food the way nature intended, as hunters." Anne rubs her chin, "Hunters,

eh? Guys, leave the hunting to me."

The group was surprised, "Anne, are you sure you can do this?" Darrel asked. "The Plantars have done so much for me," Anne replied. "I want to do something for them for a change." Sprig hops to Anne's side. "I'll go with her. I can teach her how to hunt the Plantar way, like you taught me Hop pop. What do you say?"

Hop pop accepted their offer, "Okay, but you two need to be careful. We're not in the valley anymore. Who knows what dangerous predators could be lurking about? They could be poisonous, psychic, or both. You don't know!"

"It's fine Hop pop," said Sprig. "So Anne, are you ready to hunt?" "I'm so pumped, this is going to be awesome!" Anne cheered. Cronaxx got up from his seat, "Well as much as we like to stick around, I think it's time for the boys to train new magic."

Darrel shrugged, "Well I'll be very hungry when training is over." "You and me, both," said Tint. "I assure you guys, you won't feel any hunger on this lesson," said Cronaxx.

As the two apprentices get up, Darrel grabs his staff and walks over to Anne and Sprig. "You keep an eye on her, okay Sprig?" "You got it, Darrel," said Sprig. "Don't worry, I'll be fine," said Anne. "I know, I just want to be sure," said Darrel. Darrel gives Anne a kiss on the cheek and heads off into the wilderness with the Salamanders.

Deep in the wilderness, Darrel, Tint, and Cronaxx walked for what seemed like miles. Then Cronaxx stopped in front of a clearing. "This is where we will train for the day." Darrel and Tint look at each other and nod.

Meanwhile, Anne and Sprig were face down in the dirt. Anne was disappointed when she realized that hunting was not what she expected. "I thought hunting was supposed to be cool. Conquering nature and stuff," she groaned. "There's no conquering nature, Anne," said Sprig. "Hunting is about becoming one with nature."

"But don't I at least get a cool weapon?" Anne asked. "Like a crossbow?" "Weapons are for barbarians!" Sprig cried. "Now, hunting the Plantar way involves three main steps...."

Later that day, as the sun began to set, Darrel and Tint were standing on their hands, concentrating on their focus. Cronaxx paced back and forth, watching them train. "Remember, a great wizard always connects with the life surrounded by them."

Darrel takes his words to heart, while Tint gives an eager face like he knows the lesson already. The two students, eyes closed, each give off their unique auras. Darrel gives off a blue aura, making him see the waters flowing in Amphibia. Tint gives off a green aura, giving him a vision of the flora in the forests.

Cronaxx nods in approval in their training. "That's it, be one with nature." Darrel continues to focus on the waters. Until something slammed into the creek. The sudden startle woke Darrel up and fell from his concentration.

"Darrel, what's wrong?" Cronaxx asked. "I saw something dark hit the water, I think it's approaching our campsite." Darrel grabbed his staff and rushed back into the forest. Tint opens his eyes long enough to see Darrel rush off. "Where's he going, Uncle?"

Darrel raced into the thick trees, scratching up more of his cape, but then tripped and fell into the mud. As he got back up, he shivered a bit. Suddenly, Darrel hears a couple of screams coming from the camp. He recognized them as the Plantar's voices. 'I knew something was after them,' he thought.

Then, Darrel heard another couple of screams coming from behind him. He knew it was Tint and Cronaxx. He rushed back to the source of the salamander's screams only to find their footprints and Tint's purple scarf. "Tint? Cronaxx? Where are you?" Darrel asked. He looks down at their footprints to see that they stopped under a tree. He looks up to see nothing, then rushes back to camp.

As he approaches the campsite, he hears another commotion. Gathering the courage to attack whatever's out there, he jumps out and tackles a mysterious figure. Unfortunately, that figure was Anne. "Darrel! What the heck dude?" Darrel was shocked having tackled his friend. "Oh god! I'm sorry Anne, I thought you were something else."

Darrel gets up and grabs Anne's hand picking her up. "I heard Sprig and the others scream," said Anne. "I heard the salamanders scream too," said Darrel. The two hear a clicking noise and turn around to see a predator behind them. This creature had a wolf's head, four eyes, and a scorpion tail, that grabbed their amphibian friends.

The creature growled and raced off into the wilderness. Darrel and Anne tried to catch up, but it was hopeless. "Now where do we go?" Darrel asked. "I don't know. I thought I could be a great hunter, but I don't know what I'm doing."

"Didn't Sprig teach you how to hunt?" Darrel asked. "I wasn't paying attention that much," replied Anne. "I thought it was dumb." Darrel shook his head, "The greatest downfall is the pride within ourselves. Think Anne, what are the lessons Sprig taught you?"

Anne thinks back to Sprig's lessons and remembers her first lesson: "Track your prey," she said. She squats down in the dirt and takes a whiff. Darrel takes notice and squats down too. He takes a whiff, then Anne grabs a handful of dirt and eats it. "What is it, Anne?" Darrel asked. "Polly's biscuits," Anne replied, pointing in the direction. "This way." The two humans rush off to find their predator.

The two humans find themselves outside a nest of frog skeletons. They see the creature enter, dropping off the Plantars and the Salamanders. "What the heck is that creature?" Anne asked. "A Scorpi-Leo," replied Darrel. "Tint showed me that in an animal guidebook he picked up from a library. It's half scorpion, half lion."

"That's one messed up horrorscope," said Anne. "Okay, we don't have much time. What's step two?" Anne snaps her fingers when she realizes, "Use your environment." The two humans look to their surroundings just as the creature roared.

Anne digs up a hole, and Darrel finds leaves on the ground. He places them over Anne's hole. "Okay, now all we need to do is lure it into our trap," said Darrel. "But how? Anne, what else did Sprig teach you?"

Anne was uneasy about the next step, because it made her feel weird. "There was this nature dance that Sprig showed me, but I'm not so sure." Darrel looked to his staff and came up with an idea. "That's it. If we can get the creature's attention with your dance, I can charm him into our trap.

Anne and Darrel come out of their hiding place getting the creature's attention. But her dancing didn't do much. The creature turns away, looking at the amphibians. "It's not working. Why isn't it working?" Anne asked.

"You're not focusing properly," said Darrel. "You're just forcing it. You need to let yourself go, and connect with the nature that surrounds us." "But Sprig said to follow the rhythm of nature, and there is no rhythm to hear."

Just as the Scorpi-Leo was about to eat Polly, Anne and Darrel prepare to try again. "Remember, concentrate and listen to the sounds carefully," said Darrel. "Only then will you feel the beat, and connect with nature."

Anne and Darrel get on all fours and listen carefully. Soon, the Scorpi-Leo was entranced by Anne's hunting dance and Darrel's staff waving. "I am the leaves," said Anne. "I am the morning dew," said Darrel. Anne slams her fists to the ground, completely entranced with the rhythm of nature. "I am the hunter!"

Darrel's staff glows a bright green aura, and entrances the Scorpio's eyes. It follows the two humans right into the hole. "Anne! We did it!" Darrel cried. "What?" Anne asked.

The two humans look to their trap and find the creature struggling to get out. The two humans grab their friends and escape just in time. The group return to the campsite with an excited Bessie. "Way to go you two," said Cronaxx. "That was the best hunter dance I've ever seen," said Sprig.

"I did, didn't I?" Anne asked. "I heard the music, I am one with nature. You were right, both of you were." Anne put her arm around Darrel and the group smiled. "Okay, let's get some rest," said Hop pop. "We've still got a long road ahead of us to Newtopia."

As the group prepared to sleep, Darrel stopped and took a look in his backpack. He digs in to find the old birthday gift he was going to give Anne. He walks to another clearing and sits down.

He looks down at his gift and thinks about how to give it to her. Until he hears a familiar voice. "Hey Darrel, having trouble sleeping?" Anne asked. "I just had something on my mind," said Darrel.

"On what?" Anne asked as she sat next to her. "On how to give this to you." Darrel shows Anne the gift he was going to give her on her birthday. "I was going to give this to you, but then all this happened. I hope it's not too much trouble."

Anne opens up her gift revealing a silver charm bracelet. The charms reveal a music note, a tennis racket, a pawn chess piece, a pom pom, and a gift box with a small inscription on the back. 'Happy 13th Birthday, Anne.'

"Wow, Darrel it's amazing," said Anne, "I knew you would like it," said Darrel. "Each charm represents us and our friends. So no matter how far apart we are, we'll always have a special place in your heart. And mine too."

Anne gives Darrel a big hug, "Thanks Darrel." "You're welcome, Anne," he replied. He takes his staff and creates a couple images. One being her cat Domino, and the other being Clipper. "I'll never forget them," said Anne. "And neither will I," said Darrel.

The two sit side by side watching the light images, all the while Cronaxx watches from afar. 'I never taught him that,' he thought. 'Sooner or later, Tint's going to learn a thing or two from him.'

Bumps and Wax

Chapter 28 - Bumps and Wax

While Hop pop was taking charge on driving Bessie to Newtopia, Darrel wrote in his journal again. Tint was practicing with his water training, Cronaxx stared into the drawing of the box Darrel and Anne showed them. Polly, Sprig, and Anne were going over what to do next on their next rest stop.

Darrel wrote in his journal, ' The last few days have been quite peculiar. After the ruckus with the Scorpi-Leo, we ventured off when the sun rose to the sky. I truly think that the charm bracelet I gave to Anne is one of the best presents she ever got. Though, I kinda wish I could show her the birthday video I made for her.

However, after the hunting scenario, we got lost when we took a wrong turn at night. Anne was driving, me and Sprig were navigating. Suddenly, Polly comes out wanting Sprig to tell her a story. Sprig couldn't at the time, but then a few mishaps got us a little lost. Then Hop pop came out and left us with inventory duty while he took over the reigns.

We stopped at a truck stop so Hop pop could get some rest and we cleaned up the wagon. We vented a bit because we were exhausted, and because we were careless with our words, we left her behind. We got stuck with a giant bird, until Polly zapped her.

After the truck stop, and a few repairs to the Fwagon, we arrived at the dry swamps of Amphibia. We came across an acting troupe, which captured Hop pop's undivided attention. Cronaxx and Tint were slightly impressed. Me and Anne weren't interested, especially after what happened in our elementary school play. We were working on a puzzle the whole day. But after a few bumps and distractions, we gave up.

However, we didn't know that the troupe was only a ruse. They were secretly robbers, grabbing the attention of the towns, then taking all their money. But their acts got the final curtain call when Hop pop spoke out against them.

Then, we continued on for two weeks until we came across a fork in the road. At that time, Sprig, Polly, and Tint were constantly bickering. It was a pain to hear it in the wagon, but to hear it outside, it was unbearable. Then, we came across Quallerers Pass, and we dropped them on the other side in hopes to make them get along.

As we drove on the other side of the path, we were very quiet. But Hop pop was eager to strike a conversation. Especially about me and Anne. So to avoid any contact with Hop pop, I cast an enchantment that makes Hop pop silent to us, but he could still hear himself. Eventually, we find Tint, Sprig, and Polly at the other end of the road.

They were able to stop their bickering, and started to get along with each other. I was glad to see them get along when all of a sudden, I got a tingling sensation in my spine. I summoned a vision orb to see what was going on, only to find Sasha preparing to fight us again. I was worried about her, and so were my salamander friends. This is not what I want when we find each other again.

One day, after Bessie's reins broke, we traveled to Ribbitvale in hopes of getting a new set. Hop pop states that the town is the most expensive site in all of Amphibia. I kinda wasn't impressed hearing how expensive they are. All I wanted to do was go in, get the reins and get out.

We entered the city, and already I was disgusted. All that rich, fancy getup did not make me happy. My father always told me money can't buy the things we really need. Soon after, we find an old familiar face. One-eyed Wally, who was primped up for his family name. Apparently he wasn't happy with his rich life, and he lied to his family about who he wanted to be.

So when Anne accidentally revealed his second life in Wartwood during dinner, I never felt so disappointed in how his father reacted. But after a strange game of their version of horse polo, I think his father is willing to accept Wally for who he is.

Now that we're on the road again, who knows what other bump we'll fall into...

After Darrel closes his journal, Tint calls him up to see the next town they're about to see. Before he could, Cronaxx instructed him to hide his face. Considering the fact that he knows they're almost there, the last thing they need is another distraction to delay the group. Anne did the same thing too, in hopes of not drawing attention to the group.

The group enters Stony Gulch, which has a sign that says 'Travelers Welcome'. The Planters and Anne were excited about entering because they wanted to do something while they were there.

Hop pop takes out his wallet, but is saddened to see it empty. "Sorry gang, all we can afford is window shopping," he said. The kids groan in disappointment.

Anne and Darrel start to feel a bit hot under their hoods, and Anne removes hers bringing unwanted attention to the town. "Uh-oh," said Darrel. "Right," said Anne. "Sometimes I forget about the whole, I'm a freak in this world thing."

A young tadpole started to cry, feeling scared. "It's okay," said Darrel. He removes his hood as well. "We're not monsters, we're just different. Watch." Darrel waves his staff and creates a small dragonfly of smoke. "Voila."

The crowd was most pleased with his trick. Anne joined in, twitching her nose and ears. Soon, one of the townsfolk was impressed that she gave them money for more tricks. The two looked at their amphibian friends, and Polly said, "Milk it!"

Polly places her bucket in front of them, and the two humans begin to entertain the townsfolk. From basic finger tricks, to magical illusions. All the while, Cronaxx and Hop pop look with disappointment.

At the end of the day, the two humans fill Polly's bucket up to the rim with coins. "This is amazing," said Tint. "You two made a bucket of money, literally," said Sprig. "Now how are we going to spend all of this cash?" Anne asked.

She looks around the town until she spots a building called the 'Curiosity Hut'. "That Oddity place is still open," said Anne. "How about it?" Cronaxx and Hop pop were still uneasy but they agreed. "Okay, but only if you keep your hoods up," said Hop pop. "We don't need to draw any more attention than we already did," said Cronaxx.

The two put their hoods back on, and the group entered the hut. They find the place to be filled with wax statues of the strangest of creatures. From 'Fromes' to a giant praying mantis, the hut grew creepier and creepier.

As the two humans enter the hut with wonder, the Plantars enter with deep concern. Cronaxx and Tint enter with curious looks on their faces. "No wonder they call it the Curiosity Hut," said Tint. "Something feels off," said Cronaxx. "And I think we're about to find out soon."

"Woah, look at this hot mess," said Anne. She points to what looks like a statue frog in a black suit, a dark red fuzz, an eyepatch, and holding a cane with an 8-ball in its grasp. "It actually looks life-like," said Anne. "Yeah," said Darrel, sniffing at the statue. "It even smells real."

"HANDS OFF THE MERCHANDISE!" cried the statue. The group scream, realizing that the frog statue wasn't a statue at all. The frog laughs and walks off the display, "The old mistaken for a grotesque lifeless being. Works every time."

"Welcome to my museum of oddities. I go by many names, but you can call me the Curator." "Little on the nose, but okay," said Polly. Darrel and Anne, with their faces carefully hidden, give the Curator some of their coins for a tour of the hut. "What's the matter? Faces too ugly for public? Hah!" Darrel keeps his hood covering half his eyes and says, "You could say that."

"Ooh, a mystery," said the Curator. "I love it! But enough chit chat, walk with me. I've traveled all over Amphibia collecting its most rare and frightening creatures."

The group explores the hut after the Curator takes his leave. Polly and Tint look at another strange wax creature that suddenly looks at them. The sudden scare causes the amphibians to have enough and return to the fwagon.

"We're going to wait outside, kids," said Hop pop. "Sure Hop pop. We'll be done shortly," said Darrel. Anne and Darrel continue to explore, until they see something in the artifacts display.

They take a closer look, only to see a skip man CD player. "Is that an old skip man?" Anne asked as she took it off display. "My parents had one of those when I was a toddler," said Darrel. "How did it get here?"

Suddenly, the Curator appeared behind them. "Ah, the Skip Man. It can be yours, for a million coppers! Hahaha." "Ah man," said Darrel. "Well could you at least tell us where you got that thing?" "Yeah, but where's the mystery if you know," said the Curator. "I'll tell you what. How about we trade for it, then? You guys got anything rare or vomit inducing that I could display in exchange?"

"As a matter of fact," said Anne. Darrel looks over to see what she was about to do. "Anne, Don't!" She removes her hood, shocking Darrel and the Curator. "Sweet Tadpole Mary!" he cried.

"That's right, we're the ultimate oddities baby," said Anne. The Curator looks to Darrel and understands the 'we' part in her

statement. He removes his hood, and smiles in awe of what she was talking about. Then, he looks in his cape to find the Eternal Staff in his possession.

"Kids, with an attraction like yourselves, I could make three times the amount I make on this hut," said the Curator. "Let's make a deal," said Anne. "We'll be part of your special attraction for one day only."

"Say no more kid," said the Curator. "One day of you guys, in exchange for the Skip thing and everything I know about it. You got a deal!" Anne immediately shakes his hand. "You won't be disappointed, dude." Darrel stood in shock.

"I've already got some pretty elaborate plans for your exhibit," said the Curator. "Come back tonight after closing time and we can discuss." "Elaborate huh? I like the sound of that. Come on, Darrel, let's go. See you later." Anne leaves the hut with Darrel following her close behind.

Outside the hut, the Plantars and the Salamanders were waiting for their human friends. They see Anne exit the hut in excitement, and they see Darrel exit in worry. "You guys won't believe what we found there. A Skip Man!"

The amphibians were a bit confused. "It's a human device that can play music," said Darrel. "Anne, next time remember you're talking to frogs who have not seen human devices." "Oh yeah, sorry," said Anne.

"But trust me, it's big. And that Curator guy is gonna give it to us. All we have to do is be the museum's main attraction for a day." That statement made the amphibians gasp. "Anne, you can not, by any means, do this," said Hop pop.

"I agree," said Darrel. "Sure it's the first thing we found that was located in our world. But it's not worth bringing with us. Besides, I don't trust that Curator guy. Look at him." Darrel points to the curator who happens to be grinning through the window.

"Look Anne, as much as I want to know how that thing got here in the first place, it's not worth obsessing over it." "He's right," said Cronaxx. "How about we sleep on it, and figure out some answers in the morning."

Anne was not pleased. "Okay, I can wait," she said slumly. As the amphibians head to the fwagon, Anne sneaks a grin. "Until you fall asleep." Darrel walks up and gives her a firm look. "Anne, No!" She turns, suddenly realizing Darrel was right behind her the whole time.

"Anne, I'm telling you this frog is bad news," said Darrel. "But this is our only chance to find out more," said Anne. "I thought you would stick by me on this." Darrel sighed, "That's the problem Anne. Sasha thought the same thing, and look how that turned out. I am with you all the way, but I'm telling you I won't be a part of this."

Disappointed that Darrel wouldn't partake in what she had agreed to, Anne said, "Fine! I'll get that Skip Man myself!" Darrel didn't back down, "Fine! Let yourself get snared into a trap, but don't blame me!" For the rest of the evening, the two humans remained silent with each other.

Later, while the group was asleep, Darrel grunted and squinted his eyes like before. Deep in his dreams, he finds himself in a hospital. He hears alarms going off near the surgery wing. He rushes down the hall, beaming a bright light on his staff. As he runs down the hall, he starts to hear voices. One was his voice, the second was Anne's, and the third was Sasha's.

As he reaches the door to the surgery wing, he opens it and it reveals himself unconscious in a hospital bed. But no medical equipment was attached to him. Suddenly, he wakes up and starts floating from the bed. A dark red aura engulfs around him. Then, he blasts it in Darrel's face.

That impact wakes Darrel up from his nightmare. He looks to his surroundings and sees the amphibians asleep. At the same time he

woke up, Sprig's toys fell into Hop pop's mouth. He coughs them back out and wakes up. "Dang it, boy! Wait Gang! Where's Anne?"

Darrel looks around and sees that Anne was nowhere in sight. "Oh no," he groaned. "She went back to that hut!" Tint cried. "We gotta save her," said Sprig.

Darrel immediately makes his way to the shack. Looking down on his hands, he spots a faint crimson red aura. He grows anxious about losing control, but that was soon faded with the thought that Anne may be in trouble.

With the amphibians close behind him, Darrel used his magic to burst through the door. "So much for being quiet," said Sprig. "I'm not letting that frog use my girlfriend as an attraction," said Darrel as he stomped his way through the museum.

He finds Anne in another section of the museum, being trapped in a capsule that's filling up with wax. He uses his powers to shut the machine down, gaining the Curator's attention.

"What the frog!?" he cried. "You can perform magic?!" Darrel stood his ground, staff in hand, and prepared to fight. "Let her go!" he shouted. "Let's get him!" said Sprig. He jumps above Darrel and charges at the Curator.

The Curator takes a wax staff and prepares to use it as a weapon. Sprig dodges his attack, but Darrel wasn't lucky when he smacked him upside the head. "Ha, stupid kid. I could still make money even when he's not performing magic."

He turns the wax machine back on and prepares to attack Sprig, Tint, and Hop pop. Polly and Cronaxx stayed behind, trying to figure out the secret behind the wax monuments. As the three amphibians get cornered by the Curator, Anne cries out, "Guys! Get out of here! Save yourselves!"

That cry brought Darrel out of his unconsciousness. He shot straight up, pupils glowing red, and staff at the ready. The Curator turns around and is scared, seeing the look on his face. "Oh crud," said Curator.

Darrel creates a large red cloud, and his eyes glow as bright as day, which makes all the wax attractions hatch and escape from the Curator's displays. They all enter the room where Darrel and the others are located. The Curator looked at his free attractions, and realized he made a mistake.

"Seize him!" Darrel bellowed out. The creatures all got together and dragged the Curator in the storage room. "Wait! Wait, hear me out," he pleaded. "I'll cut you all in on the profits! 10%, 11%! AH HH!" After the creatures locked the door, Darrel's magic slowly died down.

"Did we win?" Darrel asked. "Indeed we did," said Cronaxx. Suddenly, Darrel remembered something, "ANNE!" The capsule filled with wax, until Darrel took his staff and broke the glass. The wax covered all of Anne except her mouth. "Let's get out of here," said Tint. The group grab Anne and leave the hut.

Back at the Fwagon, The group set Anne near the fire to melt the wax off her. Darrel sits next to her after gathering more firewood. "Are you okay Anne?" he asked. Anne groaned, "Yeah, I'm okay. I'm sorry Darrel, I should've listened to you."

Darrel smiles and places his hand on her shoulder. "I'm just glad you're okay Anne. I don't know what I'd do without you." Anne smiles back at him, then looks down. "I just wish we could've gotten that Skip Man," she said.

Sprig and Tint smirk at each other, "You mean this Skip Man?" Sprig asked. Sprig reveals that he grabbed the item during the fight. Darrel and Anne were most pleased. "So did the Curator tell you anything about it?" Hop pop asked. "He said he got it from Newtopia," said Anne. "Which means we're on the right track!"

"You know what else is on the right track?" Cronaxx asked. "You two, keeping a low profile and not jumping into any things without us!" "I'm tired of facing my fears guys!" cried Polly. "You've got nothing to worry about from me," said Darrel. "I know," said Anne. "I never should've gone off on my own. And besides, we work better as a team."

"And the important thing is we're all okay," said Hop pop. "Except for that Curator, he's dead." Sprig hops to the sunrise and gives a navigation pose. "Onward, Family and Friends, to Newtopia!" he called.

"Oh guys," said Darrel. "I forgot to mention that the Skip Man also has a laser feature when you open it up." He points to a tree, opens the Skip man and a laser beam comes out. "Cool," said Tint. "But don't-" Before Darrel could finish, Tint walked into the laser and it hit his eye. "Look directly at it."

Another bump in the road, but Anne, Darrel, the Plantars, and the Salamanders pulled it off. Since I'm close to Chapter 30, I've decided to make the 29th chapter an original so I can do the next episode on the 30th chapter. I'm sure you'll understand why I did. Until then, Keep on Truckin' everyone!

The Apprentice's Apprentice

Chapter 29 - The Apprentice's Apprentice

After the events of the Curator and the wax museum, the group continues their trip to Newtopia. Inside the Fwagon, Darrel was cleaning his staff. Anne was showing Sprig and Polly more about the Skip Man. Cronaxx and Tint were going over old scrolls.

Darrel wipes his gemstone, making it shine a reflection on himself. Darrel smiles as he turns it and the reflection shows Anne and the frogs. He looks up at Anne with a genuine smile. 'She sure has grown in this world,' he thought. 'I wonder how time works between worlds.'

Anne looks over to Darrel who smiles at her. She blushes a bit, and turns her head to the Plantars. "Guess he really makes you happy," said Sprig. "Don't get all lovey dovey all the time," said Polly. "There are children here." Anne shrugs and continues to stare at Darrel.

Cronaxx opens a scroll and Tint observes by his side. The scroll reveals an ancient rune that shows the symbol of Amphibia armor. "This rune is as old as time itself," said Cronaxx. "Our ancestors rely on this to maintain the balance of this world." He looks to see Tint, unfocused on the lesson and watching Darrel clean his staff.

Cronaxx tapped on his head, regaining his attention. "What's on your mind?" "Oh, uh nothing, Uncle," said Tint. "Then you wouldn't have any problem focusing on the lesson," said Cronaxx. "I'm sorry. It's just that we've taught Darrel so much what you know about magic. That I never got to teach him what I know about magic."

"Your time will come to teach him," said Cronaxx. "It just ain't happening now." Tint looks down, and comes to an understanding that teaching takes a lot of responsibility and knowledge. However, somewhere in his heart, he was eager to teach him something.

Shortly after, the group arrives in the ancient ruins of an old village. Hop pop decides to take this time to stop and rest. The group took this chance to explore the area. Darrel and Tint look across the old ruins with awe and amazement. "It's like I'm at StoneHenge," said Darrel. "What's Stonehenge?" Tint asked. "It's a landmark back in my world. Hey Cronaxx, what do you-"

The two look back and see Cronaxx wandering by himself. He approaches an old building, all rubble, and nothing left but the foundation. Darrel and Tint follow him and look at the building. "This place. It feels oddly familiar," said Cronaxx. "Remember anything?" Tint asked.

Sadly, Cronaxx shook his head. "It's going to haunt me wondering, but I just can't remember what it is." Darrel looks to Cronaxx with a sincere look on his face. "It's okay if you can't remember," he said. "My grandfather once told me that our stories don't always have great starts. It's what you choose to do in your stories that counts."

Cronaxx smiled, "You're right. I think we should at least do something nice for this ruined village." "What are we going to do?" Tint asked.

Cronaxx gives Tint and Darrel four buckets, two each for a student. "We can give the old fountain square some fresh water. So I want you two to take these buckets to the well, fill them with water, and dump the water in the fountain."

Tint smirked and prepared to use telekinesis, but Cronaxx stopped him. "But I don't want any of you two to use magic. We must respect this old village. Any slight changes could cause negative consequences in our adventure."

Darrel nodded, but Tint pouted in defeat. Later on, the two students did what they were told. Darrel was a little happy trying to spruce the place. Tint however, wasn't pleased with not using magic for this simple task.

All the while, Cronaxx was practicing magic on his own. The Plantars and Anne were amazed. Darrel stopped to take a breather, just as Tint came back to dump more water. As Cronaxx reaches his peak on his powers, he reduces his power into little bits and causes flashing lights.

The group was amazed, then Cronaxx took his leave to rest up. Darrel takes a small rest, leaving Tint to get the next batch of water. Suddenly he stops, he sees Darrel resting a bit. He comes up with a plan to finish their small task. He smirks maliciously, and waves his hands at Darrel.

Darrel starts to feel his mind shut down and his eyes start to glow bright blue. He felt completely bliss and awake at the same time. Tint points at his puppet to go to his bucket. "Now follow me," said Tint.

Darrel blindly follows Tint, then goes over to fill the buckets with water. Tint then leads him to the fountain to dump the water. Then, he commands Darrel to repeat the same thing again.

"Hey Tint," said Sprig. "What's up?" Tint asked. "Me and Anne are going to watch some Suspicion Island. Wanna join when you guys are done?" Tint smiled, "I can watch now, Darrel's got this under control."

Tint goes into the fwagon with the others while Darrel continues the task he was charmed to do. The kids enjoyed their time watching Suspicion Island, that Tint suddenly dozed off and fell asleep.

Later that day, the episode ends and the group stretches out. Anne wakes up Tint by shaking his shoulder. "Hey, Tint. Wake up, we should get Hop pop to get this wagon started." Tint yawned, "Yeah, okay."

"Hey guys," said Polly. "When did this village start flooding?" The kids were surprised to hear Polly say that, until they looked outside. The ground was covered with water. "What's going on here?" Sprig asked.

Tint looked out and suddenly realized something. "Oh my Frog," he cried. He rushes off to find Darrel, overflowing the fountain with water. "Darrel Stop! I command you!" However, Darrel didn't obey, and continued to fill the buckets with water.

"Why is Darrel overflowing the fountain?" Sprig asked. "Doesn't he know what he's doing?" Tint twiddled his thumbs, unsure about what to say. "I think he's tired, so we should snap him out of it."

"Maybe he needs to get some sleep," said Anne. She walked up to Darrel's side and tried to get his attention. "Hey, Darrel. Are you feeling well? I think you need to rest." But Darrel didn't listen.

"We need to get him to sleep," said Sprig. "I'll take care of it," said Tint. He snaps his fingers causing Darrel to drop his buckets and collapse to the ground. Anne catches him in her arms and smiles softly.

"Will he be alright?" Sprig asked. "He'll be fine," said Tint. "Just get him to the wagon, I gotta clean up this mess."

Just as Anne and the Plantars were about to leave, Darrel started to levitate. Eyes glowing bright blue, a purple aura surrounding him, and hands holding the buckets again. "Uh, should we be concerned about this?" Sprig asked. "Creepy floating human!" Polly cried.

Hop pop wakes up to Polly screaming, "Kids! What's going on?!" "Darrel's going all 'that!'" Anne cried. "Oh dear," said Hop pop. "I'm going to get Cronaxx for help. See if you can get Tint to try to stop this."

Tint watches from afar and quickly tries to magically bring the water back to the well. But, Darrel reaches out with the buckets in his hand. He magically brings the water out of the well, and back into the fountain. The water gushed like a flowing river.

Tint scrambled to try and get the water back into the well, but had no avail. It only just made things worse for the apprentice. Suddenly,

Darrel's magical aura disappears and he falls to the ground. Then, the water was dispersed back into the well.

Tint looks over and finds Cronaxx fixing his mess. Darrel wakes up with a massive headache. "Ugh, my head. What happened?" Darrel asked. "You were under mind control, thanks to my great troublemaking nephew," said Cronaxx.

Tint gives off a cheeky smile, trying to weasel out of anymore trouble. Unfortunately, Cronaxx wasn't having any of it. "I hope you all learned something from this." What's that?" Anne asked as she took Darrel's arm and placed it around her shoulders. "It's that you must learn to finish something you started," said Cronaxx. "Apparently, Tint here started a magic spell he couldn't finish."

"I know," said Tint. "I'm sorry Uncle. I'm sorry that I put you under control Darrel." Darrel stopped glaring at him and smiled, "I forgive you Tint, but only if you accept Cronaxx's punishment." "Which is?" Tint asked. "You're going to clean the fwagon, and Bessie's shell, from top to bottom," said Cronaxx. "Until we make it to Newtopia."

Tint sighed with his head down, "Yes, Uncle Cronaxx." As the group returns to the fwagon, Darrel starts to regain some of his strength.

"So how did it feel being under mind control?" Anne asked. "It was like being in bliss, but you're also aware about what's going on," replied Darrel. "So I won't have to worry about you controlling me?" Anne asked. "Anne, you're nobody's puppet. And neither am I," said Darrel. The two smile and enter the fwagon.

"We're off!" Hop pop cried as he drives Bessie. "Next stop, Newtopia!" The group cheered, even Tint who was working on scrubbing the floors.

Here's to another original chapter written by me. However, it won't be the last original chapter I'll make in this story. Someone gave me a bright idea in one of my artworks and

**think I'm going to stick by it. Here's to the person's request.
Until then, Keep on Truckin'!**

Marcy at the Gates

Chapter 30 - Marcy at the Gates

It was another sunny day in the world of Amphibia. Hop pop, Polly, and Cronaxx were outside of the fwagon, staying on track to the city of Newtopia. Cronaxx took a deep breath and exhaled the fresh air. "We're getting close," he said. "I can recognize that city coast smell." "Oh boy! I'm so excited!" Pooly cried.

Darrel, Anne, Sprig, and Tint were inside the fwagon. Tint was close to finishing scrubbing the wagon, thus nearly ending his punishment for the trip. 'Thank goodness, we're almost there,' he thought. 'I'm starting to think we'll never get there.'

Sprig kept his focus on the map, trailing how far the group had come. "Newtopia!" he cried. "I can't believe it. It's been a long journey, but we're finally almost there."

Tint finishes scrubbing and walks over to Sprig's side. "Did you know that this is also my first time visiting Newtopia?" Tint asked. Sprig was surprised, "You've never been to Newtopia?" Tint shook his head, "I've mostly journeyed through the wilderness with Uncle Cronaxx, we've never stayed in major civilizations."

The two amphibians look up with happiness, only to see Anne and Darrel look down with disappointment. The two humans were looking at the photo of Anne, Sasha, and Marcy, realizing that they hadn't gotten any closer to finding Marcy.

"Anne, Darrel?" Sprig called. Darrel and Anne perked up hearing their names. "Thought you'd be more excited," said Sprig. "I'm sure they have other thoughts in their minds," said Tint.

"You're not wrong there, buddy," said Darrel. "We are excited," said Anne. "It's just that we've been traveling in Amphibia for weeks. And

we thought there would be some sighting of Marcy by now."

"Unfortunately, we have nothing," said Darrel. "Can't you magically sense where Marcy might be?" Sprig asked. "I've tried," replied Darrel. "And so has Tint and Cronaxx. For some reason, we couldn't come up with anything." "It's like she's covered in a magical barrier that's stronger than all our magic combined," said Tint.

"Maybe that's a good thing," said Sprig. Darrel glared at their frog buddy, "What are you talking about?" "Your last friend was kinda, totally evil." As Sprig points to Sasha, Anne swipes his hand away from the photo.

"Sprig," said Darrel as he took out his photo of him and Sasha. "Do you know why I kept this?" Sprig and Anne look at the photo with confusion. "I could've thrown this away, tore it up, tossed it into the wind. But I didn't. Because I still care about her. She made a bigger impact on my life than I ever knew."

"He's right," said Anne. "Sasha's the reason we met him in the first place. And we're all in this situation together. If she got zapped here, then Marcy did too."

Tint looks at Marcy in the photo and asks, "What's this Marcy like?" "She's not Sasha, I can promise you that," said Darrel. "Marcy is completely the opposite," said Anne. "She's harmless."

"As a matter of fact, she's more fun than you could possibly imagine," said Darrel. "She and I were the best tag team in Creatures and Caverns. Not only that, she's also a top student at school. However, she's also clumsy, oblivious, but that never stopped her from making us smile."

"Wow, that must be horrible being the clumsiest alive," said Sprig as he loses his grip on his glass of water. "Back home, we were there to protect her," said Anne. "But here, she's alone and instead of kickballs..."

"Anything could happen," said Darrel in a serious tone. "She could get mauled by an elephant scarab," said Tint. "Or crushed to death by a heron," said Sprig. "Or worse-" The two humans lean over and place their hands over their mouths. "Not helping guys," said Darrel.

Suddenly, the fwagon stops. Polly goes over to the others, all hyped up and excited. "Guys! Come! It's... I. Not gonna believe... AAAHHH!"

"We have arrived, kids," said Cronaxx. The four perked up and looked outside the fwagon. They gaze in amazement, and climb out to get a better look. By the coastline, stood a kingdom overtop a moat. The walls, the mushrooms, and the center tower were incredibly huge. The group knows for a fact that they have arrived in Newtopia.

"There it is gang," said Hop pop. "If there's any way to get you home, it's in that city." "Then what are we waiting for, an invitation?" Darrel asked. "Let's get down there!" Anne announced.

The group approaches the gates, crossing the shallow moat. "Well, my feet are soaked," said Anne. "You and I both," said Darrel. "My shoes have seen better days." "You're lucky you have two shoes," said Anne.

As Polly leisured her way across, she discovers a hole in the ground. "What do you think made these holes?" she asked. "Better not stick around to find out," said Hop pop. "Let's go." "I feel like this is going to come back later," said Polly.

The group approach the gates of Newtopia, that show to tower them ten fold. "Allow me," said Darrel. "I have always wanted to say this." Darrel looks up to the entrance and calls out, "Open the Gates!"

They see a small hatch open from the top of the door, revealing the gatekeeper. "You all can't come in here. Newtopia's closed," he said.

The sudden announcement startled the group, "Seriously!?" they exclaimed. "What's going on?" Tint asked. "Newtopia is closed to all outsiders," said the gatekeeper. "Till when?" Sprig asked. "Until the Barbariants are gone, of course," replied the gatekeeper. Then he closes the hatch to the gate, leaving the group outside.

"What's a barbariant?" Anne asked. "Beats me," replied Hop pop. "We don't got'em in the valley." "I think I read about them once," said Cronaxx. "They're usually-

Just then, a giant ant comes in and swoops Sprig off his feet. "Those creatures," finished Cronaxx. The barbariant attacks Sprig and Tint, just as the group comes to their aid. Anne and Polly slam on top of its head and front legs. Cronaxx launches Hop pop and croaks it on its back. Darrel casts a few fireballs to scare it into the hole.

"Guess we now know where the holes came from," said Tint. "YEA-AH, in your face, ant!" Anne cheered. "Don't celebrate too soon Anne," said Darrel. "Why not?" she asked. "Ants often travel in-

Suddenly, the ground started to shake beneath them. More barbariants come out, making new holes, and climbing out of old ones. They surround the group ready to attack. Bessie crawls into her shell, and the group gets in a defensive stance. "Starting to feel a bit antsy," said Anne.

Then out of nowhere, a sack of black goo surrounds the group. Darrel glances at it, quickly realizing what it is. "Everyone stand back!" he called. He takes his staff and shoots another fireball setting the black goo on fire. The ants quickly burrowed themselves and ran away from the fire.

"Quick thinking, Darrel," said Anne. "Way to throw that black goo in front of them." "That wasn't me," said Darrel. "It came from up there."

Darrel points up to the walls where they spot a mysterious hooded figure. The figure takes their crossbow and shoots what looked like

rope at the fwagon. "Hop pop, can I get a crossbow for my birthday?" Polly asked. "We'll talk about it later," replied Hop Pop.

The figure ziplines down getting closer to the group. "That's one cool newt," said Cronaxx. Darrel squints his eyes trying to get a closer look. "Wait a minute, that's not a newt! That's-"

Suddenly the figure's rope snapped and fell into the moat. The group groaned in pain, except for Darrel. "What was that?" Tint asked. "That's a human," replied Darrel. "What?" Anne exclaimed.

The two look down at the figure and it shows to be human after all. "Wait a second," said Anne. "No, it can't be!" said Darrel. The hooded human gets up and catches its breath.

"Okay, so, Newtopian rope can hold an average human girl for, uh, 2.3 seconds. Maybe I could reinforce the rope with iron spider silk to increase the tensile strength," The figure said in a strong female voice.

Darrel and Anne were at a loss for words. They immediately recognized the hooded figure's voice from a mile away. The two produced tears, knowing there's no doubt in their mind who that hooded figure was.

"Marcy?" they said simultaneously. The hooded figure stopped, she turns around and removes her hood to reveal a Chinese-American teenage girl who is tall and slim. She has olive skin, short, shiny black hair, and dark brown oval eyes. Anne and Darrel were right, that hooded figure was their friend Marcy.

"Anne? Darrel?" she asked as she saw them. With no more doubt in their minds, Anne and Darrel were relieved and happy.

"MARCY!" Anne cried. "DUNGEON BUDDY!" Darrel exclaimed. The two rushed over to Marcy. "ANNE! DARREL!" Marcy cried. The two humans dove into Marcy, into the water, and tightly hugged her.

"Anne? Darrel? Is that really you?" Marcy asked. "Of course it's us," said Darrel. "Marcy, I can't believe it!" Anne shouted. "You? Me? Here!?" Marcy was at a loss for words. "We know, we know. We missed you so much," said Anne as she hugged her best friend. "Oh, I missed you too," said Marcy, returning the hug. "I'm so glad you're okay," said Darrel, getting in on their reunion.

The amphibians watched over with joy and happiness. Sprig, however, was a bit uneasy. The humans got up from the water and got a good glimpse of Marcy. "Look at you," said Anne. "Look at this outfit. You're like an amazon warrior queen or something."

Anne and Darrel look at Marcy's outfit, complete with a white-furred collar which is held together with a brown shell. She also wears a brown metal chest plate, a stitched skirt, and grey winter snow boots which are wrapped with studded straps. Marcy has gray fingerless gloves on each of her hands.

"I wouldn't say a warrior queen, Anne," said Darrel. "More like a ranger." "He's right," said Marcy. "It's nuts." She then points her mini crossbow at the two. "This is real!"

"Woah, woah, Marcy. Please point that thing away," said Darrel as he ducked from her shooting range. "Oh, sorry," said Marcy. "So this is where you've been, all this time?" Darrel asked. "Yep," replied Marcy. "I gotta tell you guys, this place is wild? What an adventure. Aw, man! I've really grown out here, guys. Come into my own. Leveled up. No more clumsy, klutzy Marcy. Can you believe it?"

"Your cloak's on fire," said Anne, pointing down. The three scramble to try to put it out, while the amphibians watch them. "So Anne, Darrel, who's your friend?" Hop pop asked.

As the two put out the fire, Marcy writes in her journal. "Note to self: Non-flammable cloak is preferable." "You guys, meet Marcy," said Anne.

Marcy looks up to see the Plantars first. "Oh my gosh, who are these cuties?" she asked. "Are they your surrogate frog family? Did they find you and take you in? Oh! I love the found family trope! Gosh, this is just like the hero in my favorite game, Vagabondia Chronicles. The greatest JRPG of all time. Have you played it? Do you wanna play it, borrow it? Just say the word and I'll lend you my copy. Man, it'll change your lives!"

Darrel happily shook his head, "Spare no breath when she's this excited." "Yep, that Plantars here took me in," said Anne. "Along with Darrel and the Salamanders." Marcy observes the Plantars, starting with Hop pop's brain, to Polly's point to when she'll get her legs.

"Salamanders?" Marcy exclaimed. She looks over to see the two salamanders waving at her. "A pleasure to meet you Marcy," said Tint. "Oh my gosh, are you two salamander mages?" Marcy asked. "Indeed," replied Cronaxx. "My name is Cronaxx, this young fellow is my great nephew, Tint Tormak. And one of my students."

Marcy's jaw suddenly dropped, "So you go around all Amphibia, training by his side?" Tint nodded, "Of course." "Tint and Cronaxx found me when I was lost in Amphibia," said Darrel.

That's when Marcy turned around again, and stopped to see the staff in Darrel's hand. Something Marcy failed to notice. "Darrel, is that A Real Magic Staff?!"

Darrel gives off a smirk and nods, "Yes it is Marcy. This is the Eternal Staff. I found it in the wilderness with the salamanders. And then..." Darrel knew that Marcy would flip with what he's about to do next.

"Watch this." Darrel waves his staff, giving his hands and gemstone a natural blue glow. He creates a column of water surrounding the human boy, and then appears on top. He walks down, creating a stairway of water on the way. Then, he creates a water version of himself, Anne, and Marcy. He slams the staff down and the figures disperse back into the water. "Ta-da," said Darrel.

Marcy was at a loss for words yet again. "Uh, Anne. I think I broke her," said Darrel. Suddenly, Marcy gets right into Darrel's face. "OH MY GOD! You can perform MAGIC?! That is so DOPE!" Marcy cried. "Now we can play Creatures and Caverns in real life! Think you can do that?"

Darrel looks to his staff, then back to Marcy, "Maybe when we have time." "Anyway, Mar-Mar," said Anne. "You've been in Newtopia all this time?" "Here and there, but mostly here," replied Marcy. "I actually warped right inside the city walls. Pretty lucky, like what are the odds? Oh, oh, okay! Oh, my gosh! It turns out Newts are just like Cephalons."

"From Shadows of Xel'noth?" Darrel asked with a geeky grin. "Exactly," replied Marcy. "I just role-played like your typical artificer/rogue and the next thing I know... Boom... I'm the chief ranger of the Newtopian Knight Guard!"

The group, mostly Darrel, was impressed with her tale of how she came to be. "Okay. So Marcy, can we get into the city?" Anne asked. "We tried before, but the guards wouldn't let us in." "Unfortunately, those gates will stay closed until the barbarians are defeated," said Marcy. "Luckily, we've got a plan. Come on!"

The group arrives at a tent outside Newtopian grounds. Inside are three newts trying to come up with a plan to fight off the barbarians. The group entered the tent just as the newts greeted Marcy. "Are you guys lost?" asked one of the newts. "No no," replied Marcy. "They're with me. The Plantars traveled here all the way from the valley."

"Ah, welcome dirty peasants," said the second newt. "And these are my friends, Anne and Darrel." Anne then proceeds to poke Marcy's face. "Sorry, just... still can't believe you're here," said Anne.

As the two friends laugh, Darrel talks to the newts. "So, have you guys come up with a plan to stop these ants?" "Indeed we have," replied the third newt. "No! We have not! We've come up with nothing!" cried the second newt.

"Well, no worries," said Marcy. "I think I got it figured out. Guys, do you remember when we studied insect migration patterns in biology class?"

Darrel shrugged, "I kinda got lost after watching that documentary video." "Nope," said Anne.

"Well, since the weather warmed up, those ants have been sending scouting parties deeper into our territory. In fact, I predict a full-scale invasion is just around the corner. The king has asked me to stop them before they turn Newtopia into a giant anthill."

Darrel stood in his tracks with what Marcy said. "Woah, woah, woah, time out! You work directly for a king?" "Yep," replied Marcy. "How come you guys never told me you were under the rule of a king!?" Darrel asked the amphibians. "Well duh, we're not anarchists, Darrel," said Hop pop. "Speak for yourself," replied Polly. "I have always dreamed of meeting a king!" Darrel exclaimed.

"Anyway," said Marcy. "The plan is we're going to sneak behind enemy lines, and drive the ant queen away. With her gone, the rest should retreat."

"Oh yeah?" Sprig asked. "And how are we doing that?" Marcy shows the group a bandolier of small yellow mushrooms. Polly was in awe, "Boom Shrooms?"

"Not quite," replied Marcy. "These are Stink Shrooms. They are designed to release pheromones that should drive the queen away instantly. But we will have to fight our way through a bloodthirsty hoard of ants."

That's when Darrel got another idea. "Or we don't need to fight," "What do you mean?" Anne asked. "If I can protect us with a fire shield, we won't have to lay a finger on the ants. After all, animals are afraid of fire right?" "My interests have been restored," said Polly.

"That could work," said Marcy. "But, we'll have to be extra careful. If one thing goes wrong. Woah!" Marcy pressed down hard on the table and it lost balance. "Hehehe, flimsy table."

Anne looks down with discomfort, "Uh Marbles, this sounds pretty dangerous." "Of course it's dangerous," said Darrel. "That's why we're all going in there together." "What?" Anne asked. "I know you care for Marcy's well being," said Darrel. "But, she knows more about these things than we do."

"He's right," said Cronaxx. "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." "They're right, Anna Banana," said Marcy. "I'll be fine. Besides, we got wizards on our side."

"Your cape's on fire again," said Anne. Marcy sees her cape on fire and she and the newts freak out a bit. Anne goes over to remove her cape and stamps out the fire. "Those capes sure are flammable," said Hop pop.

"Alright, we're all set?" Tint asked. "Indeed we are," said Marcy. "Now let's get going! Mission engage!" Marcy leaves the tent and leads the group to a giant burrow near the city.

"Okay, we should be arriving there shortly!" Marcy screamed as she tripped into a hole leading to the colony. Anne and Darrel jumped after her, and shortly the amphibians followed.

Down the hole, the group reaches the bottom in one piece. "Alright, let's go!" Marcy called. "Hold up," said Anne. "Stay behind me." Anne proceeds to take point, leaving the others behind. But that didn't stop Marcy from getting in front of her again.

She falls into another hole, but Darrel grabs her with his telekinesis. "Marcy, please watch where you walk," said Darrel. "Sure, sorry about that," said Marcy.

Suddenly, the group gets ambushed by more of the ants. The gang fights them off while Marcy prepares an elixir to give them an

escape. As they make it to the other side, Marcy throws a sack behind them. Then, vines magically grew and blocked the ants' path.

Darrel was amazed, "Wow, how did you do that?" "Insta-vines," said Marcy. "Bred em' myself. Isn't vegetation just the coolest?" Hop pop was happy when she mentioned that comment. "Marcy, how'd you like to be adopted?"

As they delve deeper into the caverns, the group arrive at the queen's hive. They watch as the queen lays eggs, then covers them with strange goo. "Oh my god," whispered Tint. "It's just like the queen from the alien movie I saw," whispered Darrel.

"So what's the plan Marcy?" Cronaxx whispered. "We've got to plant the mushrooms around the room," said Marcy. "She'll get a nose-full, but we have to move fast. These bad boys are set to go off in five minutes."

She gives the group the mushrooms, "Also, the queen is mostly blind, but hears very well. So be very, very quiet." Darrel smiles, "You can count on that Marcy. I'm always quiet."

Darrel and the Salamanders cover their side of the room, planting mushrooms as quietly as possible. Then, they hear a rock fall from the ceiling. He sees Anne and Marcy duck out of the way, so the group hides as the rock hits the ground.

Meanwhile, Sprig was planting his mushrooms, just as an egg hatch. The ant larva jumps on Sprig and he screams, gaining the queen's attention. The queen grabs Sprig and eats him. Then, she calls the colony to protect her.

The group watched in horror, but Marcy spoke up. "He's still alive! These bugs take a while to digest their food. Look!" The group looks inside the queen's stomach and see's Sprig silhouette through the light.

"We gotta do something!" Tint called. "I'll save him," said Marcy. She prepares to save Sprig, but Anne stops her. "Marcy! Wait! I can do it!"

Darrel approaches the two, "Anne! She's the only one who's paid attention in insect biology class! She can do it!" "No! I can handle it," said Anne. "Why is it so hard for you to trust me, Anne!?" Marcy cried. "Because I can't lose you again!" Anne shouted.

Darrel and Marcy were surprised by her outburst. "I just got you back, and I don't want to lose you." Anne started to cry, but Darrel and Marcy reassured her. "You're not going to lose me," said Marcy. "I know this is something she can do," said Darrel. "If I can trust her, so can you."

Anne takes a deep breath, and nods in agreement. "Okay, you got this Marcy," she said. "See you both on the other side," said Marcy. She takes her leave and jumps on the ants and into the queen's mouth. "Dibs on the crossbow," said Polly.

The group watches in suspense, but then in awe as Marcy comes out with Sprig. Her eyes glow green for a brief second then she winks to Sprig. "Trustworthy," he said.

As they regrouped, the queen called to her colony to attack them. Darrel and Tint cast a column of fire to protect them from the gathering ants. "Marcy, any more ideas?" Anne asked. Marcy takes out her phone and counts down. Darrel smiled and said, "Bombs away,"

The stink shrooms go off and fill the stench in the whole cavern. Scaring the queen and her colony in the process. The colony leaves the outskirts of Newtopia, leaving the group in the caves alone.

"Doesn't smell too bad," said Sprig. "Maybe," said Marcy. "But if you breathe in it too much, it'll liquify your lungs." "Let's bail," said Tint.

The group leave the anthill, and Marcy thanks Anne and Darrel for having her back. "If I could change in Amphibia, so could she," said Darrel. "You're on fire again," said Hop pop, Polly, and Cronaxx. "Oops, sorry," said Darrel and Tint as they put her cape out.

The group hear bells ringing from the city and watch as the gates finally open. "Who's ready to go to Newtopia?" Marcy asked. "And write up a detailed report?" The group enter the city past the gates and gaze in amazement.

"Wow," said Darrel. "Look at this place," said Anne. "Mighty impressive," said Hop pop. "Pinch me, I must be dreaming," said Tint. "This place is like a sacred city," said Anne.

Suddenly, the group was introduced by a group of Newtopian guards. They surround the group, then make way for someone important. An amphibian dressed in a ballgown, cleared her throat.

"Well met Lady Olivia," said Marcy as she took her cloak and bowed. "The king sends his greetings, Marcy," said Lady Olivia. "He trusts you have succeeded." She throws the head of a fresh barbaric-ant. "Ah, still fresh I see," said Lady Olivia. "Excellent work, as expected from the great Marcy Wu. I see you have company."

"Lady Olivia, meet Anne and Darrel," said Marcy. "Some of the friends I was telling you about. Turns out Anne got transported to Frog Valley, and Darrel was transported to the Wild Uncharted Marshlands."

"It's a pleasure to meet you both," said Lady Olivia. Darrel bowed in respect. "The pleasure is mine as well," he said. Anne bows along with him. "Oh, and here are the Plantars and the Salamandrian mages," said Marcy. The amphibians bowed in respect.

"Welcome to Newtopia, Plantars, Mages, Anne, and Darrel," said Lady Olivia. "This is an old city, but one rich in history and splendor. Please don't touch anything that looks important. Do enjoy your stay."

Lady Olivia, and the guards take their leave. "She seems friendly-ish," said Hop pop. "So you're a big deal here or something?" Anne asked Marcy. "Let's just say I have a perfect record when it comes to missions," replied Marcy.

"Okay," said Cronaxx. "Hop pop, kids, let's go unpack the fwagon. We should give these humans some time to themselves." "Sounds like a plan," said Hop pop. "Buzzkill," groaned the kids.

Later that day, Anne, Marcy, and Darrel were skipping rocks in the city fountain. Darrel used his powers to skip rocks, making Marcy awe in envy. "I still can't get over the fact that you can perform magical abilities," said Marcy. "What can I say, I came out of my shell," said Darrel.

"So, neither of you found a way home either?" Marcy asked. "Nope," said Anne and Darrel. "Have you ever tried using your staff, Darrel?" Marcy asked. "Oh I tried once," replied Darrel. "Unfortunately, it didn't work, even with Tint and Cronaxx."

"You know, it's funny," said Anne. "I've been hoping to find you guys for so long. But now that we've found each other, I have no idea what to do next." "I know what you mean," said Darrel. "First things first, though, we have to find Sasha," said Marcy.

"Oh, the funny thing was that we found her already," said Darrel. "Things got complicated," said Anne. "How so?" Marcy asked.

"When we found her, she was allied with the Toad Empire," said Darrel. "She tried to feed Hop pop to a large plant and I snapped." He took out his crumbled photo and took a deep breath. "She was not the girl I fell in love with anymore. So, I broke up with her on the spot. It made her angry and upset."

"Oh, I'm sorry Darrel," said Marcy. "It must've been pretty hard." "That's okay," said Darrel. "Because I found someone else." "Really? Who?" asked Marcy. Darrel and Anne simply smiled, blushed, and held their hands in front of her.

Marcy looked at their hands and gasped, "No... Way. You guys are a thing?! I'm so happy for you!" "Thanks," said Anne. "Sasha however, didn't take it too well. Anyway, long story short, Darrel destroyed Toad tower, and we don't know where Sasha is now."

Marcy drags her hand in the water. "Well even if we find a way home, it's pointless without Sasha." "So what now?" Anne asked. "Sasha was the only one who came up with the plans back home," said Darrel. "I think it's high time we come up with the plans ourselves."

"Darrel's right," said Anne. "I mean it's worked out for us so far," said Marcy. Marcy gets up and stands in a power pose. "Stand up guys!" Darrel and Anne stand up and get in their power poses. "It's time to make a pact," said Darrel. Marcy and Anne nodded.

"I am Marcy Wu!" "I'm Anne Boonchuy!" "And I'm Darrel Loyallitat!" The three put their hands together and finish their pact. "And together, we're going to find Sasha, and find a way home!" "All for one and one for all!" Darrel called out.

Soon, the three sat back down. "Okay, so I wanna know everything that's happened to you since you got here," said Marcy. "You got any photos?" "We sure do," said Darrel. "Well, Anne has most of them." "He hardly ever touched his phone since he got here," said Anne.

As the three look over the photos, Marcy was gawking over Darrel's magical abilities, and gushing at he and Anne's cute moments. Sprig, Tint, and Hop pop were unpacking their stuff from the fwagon. Polly and Cronaxx were watching from afar, making sure everything went smoothly.

Meanwhile, from the top of a tower observing the group. A mysterious large figure watches them, then turns to a large chessboard. "The pieces are starting to fall into place," said the figure. "It's time for the game to begin." Then, the figure places two game pieces that look like Anne and Darrel next to the piece that looks like Marcy.

Scavenger Hunt

Chapter 31 - Scavenger Hunt

Darrel and Anne couldn't be happier than they are right now. They have finally arrived at the greatest city in Amphibia known as Newtopia. And, after months of being apart, they have also reunited with their friend Marcy. The Plantars and the Salamanders were happy to see them together again.

Despite having magical powers on his side, Darrel felt more blessed than he ever did before. He couldn't believe that he would eventually find his friends in a mysterious uncharted world. Seeing them here made him think about his life back home. Unfortunately it made him cry a few tears. Now, all that's left is to find Sasha again, and then come up with a way to return home.

In the town of Newtopia, the group was dining outside a restaurant. "Enjoy everyone," said Marcy. "This place makes the best beetle burgers in all of Newtopia." "Hakuna Matata everybody," said Darrel as he chomps down on his burger.

As the group eats, Marcy writes in her journal. "Oh you got a journal too?" Tint asked. "Yeah," replied Marcy. "Wait, too?" Darrel pulls out his journal and Marcy smiles. "What kind of entries did you write in this world?" Marcy asked. "I'll show you," replied Darrel.

As Darrel and Marcy exchange entry logs, Hop pop and Cronaxx give impressive looks. Even Polly was amazed by Marcy's drawing of herself. "Say Anne, have you been keeping a journal too?" Hop pop asked. Anne turns around to show two straws up her nose. "Look guys, I'm a 'Straw-lrus'. Like a walrus but with straws."

Darrel, Marcy, and Sprig laugh at her amusement. "What's a walrus?" Tint asked. "A walrus is an animal from our world," replied

Darrel. "I used to see them all the time when my family and I go to the zoo."

Just then, a newt waiter comes in with the check. "Now who should I give the bill to?" he asked. He looked at Anne and said, "Probably not you." "Oh, I'll take it," said Marcy. "It's oh let me-" "49 Coppers," said Darrel unexpectedly.

The newt reveals the check to the group, revealing 49 coppers on the bill. "Correct," he said. The Plantars, and the Salamanders were impressed. "Wow, can you do math like that too Anne?" Hop pop asked. "Darrel's pretty much a whiz when it comes to numbers," replied Anne.

"Can any of you guys imagine if Darrel or Marcy got stuck with us instead of Anne?" Polly asked. "We'd be set for life." "Hush Polly," said Hop pop. "Think those thoughts, don't say them."

Polly's statement made Anne a bit upset. But then, "LOOK OUT!" she cried. The group ducks and sees an arrow fly past them, hitting the post. "We're under attack!" Tint cried. "No, no, it's fine," assured Marcy. She goes over to the arrow and reveals a scroll attached to the arrow.

"It's just a message from the king," said Marcy. "The king has a dangerous way of sending messages," said Darrel. Marcy opened the scroll and said, "Oh, correction. It's a puzzlegram from the king." "Run that by us again," said Cronaxx.

Marcy flips the scroll to the group revealing three images with three steps. "He's basically hidden clues around the city and when I collect them all, I get a message. Ah, it's so fun!" "If this is like a scavenger hunt, where do we go first?" Darrel asked.

"Okay, the first picture is a tree," said Tint. "There's plenty of trees in Coral Park," said Marcy. "Then that's our first stop," said Tint. "A puzzle tour of Newtopia? Count me in," said Sprig. The kids, except

for Polly, Hop pop, and Cronaxx, venture off into Newtopia to solve the puzzle.

In the streets of Newtopia, Marcy takes the lead as Anne, Darrel, Sprig, and Tint look around the buildings. While Sprig and Darrel marvel at the city, Tint looks over to Anne. "Is something wrong, Anne?" he asked.

"I don't know, Tint," she replied. "It's just that, Marcy's always been the smart one in our group. I've always felt dumb around her. She and Darrel are inseparable when it comes to video games and Creatures and Caverns."

"Wait a minute," said Tint. "Are you saying you're jealous?" Anne hushed him, "Not so loud." "Look Anne," said Tint. "Maybe after we complete the King's puzzlegram, you can talk to them about your situation."

Then, Anne came up with an idea, "Or maybe if I can complete the King's puzzlegram before Marcy, it'll prove how smart I really am. Thanks for the talk, Tint." "But Anne.." Tint watches as she rushes over to her friends. "This isn't going to end well."

"Here it is guys, Coral Park," Marcy announced. The kids were amazed by the coral trees reserved in one spot. "Okay Marcy, what's the first clue?" Darrel asked.

"Looks like a coral tree with one eye open and one eye closed," said Anne. Then, she approaches one of the trees and hugs it. "What if we're not supposed to look at the trees, but we're supposed to listen to them."

Darrel looks at a statue with a newt looking through a telescope. Then, he comes up with an idea. He climbs up the statue, removes the statue's hood and finds a lens in the back of its head. "I've got it!" he cried. He looks in the lens and finds the first clue.

"There's a word on the trees," he said. "What does it say?" Sprig asked. "It says Bring," replied Darrel. "How did you know how to do that?" Anne replied. "I just remembered the same scenario from a treasure hunting video game I played. The character looked through a telescope and found the island where the treasure is."

Marcy checks off the first part of the message. And moves on to the next clue that shows a dragonfly and a compass showing west. "I recognize that one!" cried Marcy. "Come on gang, let's motor." The group heads off with Anne trailing behind helping a girl get her caterpillar down.

Later, the group arrive at the next clue. The location was a clocktower with a dragonfly weathervane on top. The group looks down on the map and Marcy asks, "Why the W? What's that supposed to mean?"

"Let me take this one Mar Mar," said Anne. She hands her the map and looks carefully. She shows signs of struggling, then bolts from the group. "Gotta go to the bathroom!" Darrel was really concerned about her. "Is she okay?" "Actually, there's something I gotta tell you," said Tint.

Tint and Darrel step away from Sprig and Marcy so that they can have their conversation. Suddenly, Marcy realized something. She walked over to the wall of the building, showing scratch marks, and said, "I knew this looked familiar. The lines between the bricks of the West side wall match up perfectly with the street grid of Newtopia."

"Which brings us right about here." Marcy removes a brick from the same location they are in, revealing another letter to the king's message. "Me. Bring... me. Only one clue left to go."

Meanwhile, Tint explains everything to Darrel about Anne's situation. "She told you that?" Tint nodded, "Yes. Now she's trying real hard to prove that she's just as smart as you and Marcy. I guess she didn't tell you because she didn't want to hurt you, or lose you."

Darrel sighed, "Anne could never lose me." He places a hand on Tint's shoulder. "I don't think she even knows why I fell in love with her."

"Hey guys!" Sprig called. "Marcy figured out the next clue. Let's get Anne and move out." "You got it," said Tint. "I'll go get her," said Darrel. The two Amphibians joined Marcy while Darrel went to find Anne chatting with an old newt named Doris. The two humans ran to catch up with the others.

"Hey Anne, Darrel, glad you could catch up," said Marcy. "Take a look at the final clue," Anne pulls out the puzzleagram to read the last clue. It is revealed to be a letter M with a triangle symbol below it. "It's referring to the big bridge downtown," said Marcy. "Come on."

The five rush off past the burger joint, where Cronaxx, Polly, and Hop pop are still at. Hop pop was eating more lunches to receive free gifts. But Polly and Cronaxx were unamused with his obsession.

"Just one clue left," said Tint. "Yeah, and Marcy will probably solve it before we get there," said Anne unamused. "Anne, just because Marcy's good at puzzles doesn't mean she's smart and your dumb," said Sprig. "Thanks dude," said Anne.

As the group arrive at the bridge, they stop to see a gold statue of Marcy. "How did you-" "I made a few suggestions on how to increase the weight limit, and they kinda, like, named it after me," said Marcy. "Now come on, let's see where this triangle fits in."

Darrel's stomach starts to growl, "Do you mind if I sit this out? I gotta get some brain food." "Sure Darrel, go ahead," said Marcy. Darrel goes to a 'Gnatcho' stand and grabs a batch of gnatchos. He spots Anne feeling distraught on a bench nearby.

Then a gust of wind blows the trays on the gnatcho stand away. "I got em!" Anne called out. She rushes to grab the trays before they fall to the ground. Darrel was impressed that he didn't need to help her with his magic.

"Thanks sweetie," said the standee. Then she gives her gnatchos on the house as a thank you. Darrel smiled at her desire to help others she only met for a brief moment. "You okay Darrel?" Tint asked. "Yeah, I'm okay," replied Darrel. "And I think Anne reinforced my affection for her. Watching her help others, the way she helped me, brings out more of herself than ever before."

Then, Anne gets up from the bench and rushes off to find the others. Darrel and Tint do the same. They find Marcy and Sprig stumped on the bridge. "Come up with anything, guys?" Darrel asked. "Nope," replied Sprig.

Anne took a look at the puzzle and said, "So, a triangle has three sides, right? Three rhymes with, er... "tea." You brew tea with water, and there's water in, uh... The sewer! Let's go down there."

Darrel was confused, "I don't think that feels right." The two delve deep until they reach a valve. "That looks just like the circle from the clue, obviously we should turn it." Anne turns the valve and opens a hatch revealing an alligator.

The alligator spots the group and they make a run back topside. Unfortunately, a manhole cover was blocking the way out, and it was too heavy for Anne to lift on her own.

Then, Anne hears a familiar voice, and calls for help. The voice happens to be the gnatcho vendor and opens the cover. The alligator grabs Marcy by the cape and removes it, buying the group some time. Then, other more citizens come to help the group out of the sewer. The alligator jumps to the group, only to have its snout stuck in the hole.

"Anne are you okay?" Hop pop asked, wearing a suit of armor. "No trouble, Tint?" Cronaxx asked. "No trouble Uncle," replied Tint, "Just helping my friends solve the puzzle." "As long as you're okay," said Cronaxx.

"Can't you go through ten minutes without having to get into some kind of trouble?" Hop pop asked. "Cut her some slack," said Darrel. "She didn't mean to put us in danger. And I think I know why."

"Anne, Tint told me everything about how you were feeling dumb with me and Marcy around." Anne was shocked, Marcy was surprised. "Anne, is that true?" Marcy asked. "I don't know," said Anne. "Maybe?"

"I guess I get a little jealous of you sometimes. And the way you guys work well together, makes you guys more smart and I'm not." Darrel smiled and said, "Anne, why do you think I fell in love with you?" Anne perked up, "Huh?" "It's because you're kind, loyal, and you would be willing to do anything to help others. You helped three complete strangers today, and in return, they helped you."

"Darrel's right," said Marcy. "I mean sure, I'm good at solving puzzles, and Darrel's good with music and video editing. But, you are amazing at making connections. And I have trouble looking people in the eye sometimes. To be honest, I'm kinda jealous of what you can do."

Darrel takes Anne's hand and says, "You are the best friend and girlfriend I could ever have. And if you changed yourself into someone else, I would throw myself back into the marshlands."

Anne blushed and smiled, "Thanks you guys. Maybe that's why we make a good team." The three humans hug it out while Sprig and Tint come up with gnatchos. "Anyone want a snack?" Sprig asked.

Anne takes a chip and then has realized something, "Guys! The symbol is a gnatcho!" "Tint! Empty the tray!" Darrel cried. Tint and Sprig eat off the snack and the final piece of the message is revealed: The Plantars.

"That means," said Marcy, "the message is: Bring Me The Plantars." Marcy gets all giddy, "Guys, we've been summoned! And you solved the puzzlegram Anne." "Self-esteem boost and an audience with the

ruler of this world? Win-win, baby!" Anne cheered. "Oh my god, I get to live out my dream and meet a living King!" Darrel cried.

"So you guys want to feed gnatchos to that alligator?" Anne asked. The group agrees and feeds the gator one chip at a time. "Just look how happy it makes him," said Sprig.

Newtopian Life

Chapter 32 - Newtopian Life

After solving the puzzlegram sent by the King of Amphibia, Anne, Marcy, Darrel, the Plantars, and the Salamanders enter the Great Hall. Darrel's staff kept sparking small fireworks with every step Darrel took getting closer to the king. Darrel's face locked an excited grin, and Tint was happy to see him smile as well.

The group gazed with magnificence as they walked down the hall. "Dang, girl," said Anne. "This is where you've been hanging out this whole time?" "I wouldn't say I 'hang out' here," replied Marcy. "But Yes! Staying at the castle has been awesome!"

Tint gazes in amazement then turns to Cronaxx, who is supporting his head with his hand. The moment Cronaxx stepped foot into the great hall, something in his mind felt odd. The more he thought about it, the more tense his head got.

"Are you okay Uncle?" Tint asked. "Of course I am, Tint," replied Cronaxx. "It's just that this place feels familiar to me. Like I've been here before." "It could be a deja vu kind of scenario," said Darrel. "Deja vu?" Tint said in a confused tone. "It's an expression humans say when a sentence or an action is repeated many times over."

"Sounds like a fun expression," said Tint. "It's only fun when it's not used often," said Anne.

"Wow, I can't believe we're here," said Sprig. "And that we're about to meet the king of Amphibia," said Polly. Her words made Hop pop grow anxious and worried about making his first appearance to the king. "Wow, just look at this place," he said. "Am I dressed okay? Should I have worn my silk ascot? I'll go back and get it."

He turns around to change his appearance, but Marcy stops him. "Hey, hey don't stress guys. This is no big deal."

"Are you kidding me Marcy?!" Darrel exclaimed. "This is the King of Amphibia we're talking about. A real live King! I have always dreamed of meeting one in person. This is definitely a big deal to me!"

Just then, the doors open revealing Lady Olivia. "Okay, frog family, salamander family," she began. "You are about to meet King Andrias. This is a big deal." Anne and the Plantars gulped while Darrel grinned with excitement. Then, he takes a deep breath, clears his throat and follows Lady Olivia in the king's throne room.

While entering the throne room, the group gaze at the glass windows and the knights standing guard until they reach the other end of the room.

"May I present to you Andrias Leviathan, Lord of Amphibia. Peacekeeper of a thousand years and the first of his name." Lady Olivia introduced.

The group looks above to see the mighty King Andrias. "Now that's king sized," said Anne. Darrel's legs quivered with excitement. What stood before them was a giant figure covering the light that shines in the throne room.

King Andrias is revealed to be a giant salamander, white bearded, with light blue skin and a lighter underbelly and wears a metal suit of armor. He wears a crown on his head and has shoulder pauldrons shaped like snail shells. He also wears a cape over his armor with a gold snake belt and a purple and yellow tunic.

"Hello Plantar Family!" he bellowed. At first he looked serious, but then revealed a joyful personality as he smiled down upon them. "And, Cronaxx?! Oh joy! Bring it in you guys. Bring it in." The king gets up from his throne to give the Plantars and the salamanders a hug.

"Quick kids, bow," said Hop pop. The Plantars bow along with Cronaxx and Tint. King Andrias scooped up the amphibians and squeezed them. "It's so good to finally meet you! And it's good to see you again Cronaxx!"

"You know my great uncle?" Tint asked. "Sure did, he and I were such good friends," replied King Andrias. Despite his old age, and his deprived memory loss, Cronaxx started to feel a sense of familiarity with Andrias. "My memory is still very fuzzy," said Cronaxx. "But, I think it's hard to forget dear old friends. Good to see you again, Andrias."

King Andrias lets go of the amphibians and they regain their ability to breathe. "I love this guy!" Polly cried.

King Andrias laughed until Lady Olivia stepped in, "Dear King Andrias, just once it would be nice if you followed proper castle etiquette," King Andrias simply shrugged it off, "Oh etiquette smetiquette!"

King Andrias turns his head to the humans. "Ooh, and what do we have here?" Anne and Darrel grinned with nervousness and excitement. Marcy stood proudly seeing her friend's reactions.

"You two must be Anne and Darrel," said King Andrias. "Sup? Um, am I saying that right? Sup?" Marcy gives him the thumbs up of approval. "You got it!"

King Andrias laughed, "The thumb of approval. And here's a thumb for you two." King Andrias gives the two humans a thumbs up.

Then, Darrel drops to a knee, bowing to the king. "My liege, I have always dreamt of this moment," he said. "I have always seen kings in books and documentaries. But never in person. I have my friend, Marcy to thank for making my dream come true."

Marcy smiled, "Aw, thanks Darrel. I'm always glad to help my friends." Anne gives King Andrias a fist bump, much to his delight.

He jumps up and down shaking the room and knocking Anne over to Darrel's side.

"Delightful," said the king. "But now, let's get down to business shall we? Getting you kids back home, safe and sound." The three humans smiled knowing that with the King on their side, they can have all the resources needed to get home.

"Hmm... Alas," said King Andrias. "Without the music box, I'm afraid there's nothing I can do. Marcy doesn't have it, and I assume you two don't have it either."

"Oh, uh, actually, I do have the box," said Anne. "What? Are you serious?" Marcy asked. "She's not lying," replied Darrel. "I can vouch for that, your majesty. She had the box when we first got to Amphibia."

"Why this is marvelous news," said King Andrias. "Come, come, let's see it." "Well I don't "have it" have it," said Anne. "Hop pop left it with some contacts to see what they could learn about it." Hop pop stood nervously chuckling, while Tint sighed with a hint of disgrace.

"But I do have a photo of it," said Anne holding her phone. "Actually, I have a better idea," said Darrel. "I can create a visual illusion of the box so everyone could see. Even the great King Andrias himself."

"Strange," said King Andrias. "I thought Marcy said that humans can't do magic." "It wasn't until Darrel found the Eternal Staff," said Cronaxx. "Now Darrel can harness its powers. Observe."

Darrel gets in position and waves his staff. The gem glows a bright blue aura and creates a large visual representation of the music box. "Here it is," said Darrel. "One music box, for everyone to see."

"Very impressive," said King Andrias. He takes a closer look at Darrel's illusion. "Hmm, how peculiar. Marcy, didn't you say the gems were colored? Look here. They're... they're gray."

"Hey, you're right," said Anne. Her cheeks then give an embarrassing blush. "I never actually noticed that." Darrel was surprised. "Wow, I thought you knew that when you showed it to us," he said.

"This will require further study in the deepest of our archives," said King Andrias. "Give me a few days to work with this information. At that time, we shall reconvene and set a glorious plan in motion."

"Great!" cheered Anne and Darrel, "Mar Mar, what can we do to help?" "Can you translate ancient Amphibian runes?" Marcy asked. "I think I can," replied Darrel. "With more proper training, I can use a spell to translate the runes in the English language. Then it's all a matter of working together like on our group projects."

"Splendid plan, Darrel," said King Andrias. "Until then, my dear amphibious friends, go forth and enjoy the sights of Newtopia. We've booked you a suite at the Hemisphere Hotel, my treat. And here..."

King Andrias takes out his fists, giving the group a gust of wind. "Pick a hand!" Anne walks over to choose, until Andrias instructs her to choose his right hand. She does so, revealing nothing. "Psyche!" laughed the King. "But wait, what's this?"

Up his sleeve, King Andrias reveals a golden credit card. "The Royal Credit Card! It can grant you access to do anything in Newtopia." He gives the card to the Plantars, "Be safe with it now. Wars have been waged for less."

"Whoa ho ho ho!" Sprig cried. "We get to explore Newtopia with unlimited money? This is a dream come true! Onward, family! Time to see Newtopia!"

But when the group checked into the hotel, they were all ready to rest up after a long journey. "What are you guys going to do?" Sprig asked. "Kill time," Darrel replied. "How can you kill time?" Polly asked.

Just then, Darrel and Tint were already in a deep sleep while Cronaxx was reading an entertaining novel.

As Darrel slept, he dreamed about flying in the air. With the staff in hand, he brought his friends alongside him. Including Lady Olivia, King Andrias, Captain Grime, and Sasha. The group forms a V formation like a flock of geese, flying over the lands of Amphibia.

Darrel looks back at his flock and they all give him a smile. Then out of nowhere, Darrel hears a voice. "Darrel," Darrel turns to the voice and flies directly to it.

Darrel flies down through a thick cloud as fast as he could, only to reach a hospital from his hometown. The moment he touches down, he reaches to the voice as it grows louder and louder.

He comes to a pair of doors that lead to the emergency room. He opens the doors revealing a bright light and two silhouettes.

"Darrel," said one of the silhouettes. "We miss you. Please come home." Darrel immediately recognized the voice. "Mom? Dad?" "She needs us more than ever," said his father's voice. "Hurry back, please."

The bright light engulfs the silhouettes then engulfs Darrel. Darrel wakes up from his dream, and looks around his room. Darrel sighs, "I gotta get home, I just gotta. I can't be away if..."

Darrel remembered his dream and clenched the bed as he produced tears from his eyes. "... *when* it happens," he finished. He takes a deep breath and steps out of the hotel room.

As he journeys down the corridor of the hotel, he finds Sprig causing a ruckus down below. "Typical Sprig," he said. He takes the elevator down to the lobby floor and regroups with him. "I hope you weren't causing a lot of trouble while we were sleeping, Sprig."

Sprig turns to see Darrel with a disappointed look on his face. "Unfortunately," admitted Sprig. "Don't worry, I won't tell them what happened," said Darrel. He looked at the bellhop and said, "I hope he didn't cause you too much trouble."

"It's okay," said the bellhop. "It's people like him that make me ever so slightly positive about the future." "Didn't you bring our bags to our room?" Darrel asked. "I sure did," she replied. "Bella the Bellhop, at your service."

Darrel gives her a small sack of coppers from his pocket. "I've been saving these for something else. But after what Sprig put you through, I think you deserve it." Bella smiled, "Thank you so much, sir. This'll help me get one step closer to paying off my college debt."

After the three get ant sundaes, Darrel and Sprig return to the room. "So, what's next for our adventurous amphibian?" Darrel asked. Sprig just yawned and went to bed.

Then, Anne's alarm goes off, and the group wakes up refreshed and hyped. "Nothing like a nap to feel rejuvenated and full of energy," said Hop pop. "You guys want to check out the hotel?"

Darrel smiled, "Why not? Let's get a move on. But I think we should let Sprig sit this out. He got a head start on us at the hotel."

The group heads out to explore the hotel as Sprig stays in to sleep. Tint and Cronaxx head to the information booth to purchase a map of Newtopia. Polly and Hop pop went to one of the Hotel's restaurants to enjoy their cuisine.

Anne and Darrel took the time to enjoy the Hotel's indoor Ferris Wheel. The two climb into one of the seats and the two enjoy the ride. "This is actually the first time I've been on a Ferris wheel," said Darrel. "Well there's always a first time for everything," said Anne.

The two reached the top as the Ferris Wheel stopped. They looked outside the dome with amazement, unaware that the two were

holding hands again. "This is amazing," said Darrel. "I wish we could stay up here a little longer," said Anne. Just then, the Ferris wheel started moving down again, and the two got off when they made it back down.

Later on, the group grew tired and had dinner before they went to sleep. "So what's on the agenda for tomorrow Cronaxx?" Darrel asked. "The three of us are going to go to the spiral tower on the other side of town to learn more advanced spells to help aid on our journey," said Cronaxx. Darrel and Tint nod and the two prepare for tomorrow.

The next day, while the Plantars went on a tour of the town, Darrel and the salamanders made their way to the spiral tower at the edge of town. The tower inside contained a spiral staircase, enchanted to keep moving so that newts could grab specific books. The walls inside were built in shelves containing books, scrolls, blank parchment paper, and alchemy tools.

"Wow," said Tint. "This place is amazing. It's like the archives near Wartwood, only more above ground." "I'm glad you like it, Tint," said Cronaxx. "Cause we're going to be here for the whole morning."

"We're going to find as many books as we can with ancient Amphibian languages," instructed Cronaxx. "Then, we're going to find a spell book that will help Darrel translate the writing in his language."

Darrel and Tint nod, and go straight to finding books. They walk up to the front desk to find a Newt reading a book. Cronaxx walks up to ask for help. "We'd like five books that contain ancient Amphibian tongue, please."

The newt points them to the stairs without making a sound. The three step on the first stair and the trio were zoomed up to the section where their books are located. Tint grabbed the books, then the three went back down.

"Okay Tint, now you wait here until we get the spell book we need," said Cronaxx. Darrel approaches the newt and says, "We're also looking for a spell book that can help translate Amphibia writing into other languages."

The Newt points to the staircase again, and Darrel steps on. He zooms up to the spell book section, and the book blinks for Darrel to pick up.

Outside the tower, Darrel opens the spellbook, then it comes to life and bites down on his tongue. "Ow!" Darrel screamed. The spell book turns to the staff and licks the gemstone. The staff glows bright green and points a beam of light back to the book.

"Is it working?" Tint asked. Cronaxx nodded, "Now Darrel just needs to recite the command to translate words in his tongue." Darrel looks in the book carefully to see the command spell. " *Etalsnart*. "

Darrel opens one of the books they borrowed and the staff decrypts the amphibian language into English words for Darrel to read. "Hey! It worked!" Tint exclaimed. Cronaxx smiled, "Now all we have to do is practice these new spells and we'll be prepared for what's next."

Darrel smiled and looked at his enchantment lesson. He perks up, and comes up with an idea. "We should go to the marketplace," he said. "I know what we should get for my enchantment practice."

The two salamanders nod and make their way to the marketplace. Darrel looks across the stands to find his item to enchant. Cutting across the merchants in the street made him feel like he's close to home.

"This marketplace reminds me so much about the farmer's markets at Wartwood and back home," he said. "What were they like in your world?" Tint asked. "Only that they were much more crowded than these streets," said Darrel. "There were times that my family and I were stuck in traffic and had to wait until the streets cleared up."

The three head to a stand where the merchant sold carpets. Darrel pointed to one with a shade of blue and Cronaxx paid for it. "So you're going to enchant a carpet first?" Cronaxx asked. "You bet," said Darrel. "It'll be just like the Arabian Nights."

"What are the Arabian Nights?" Tint asked. "It's a popular story book back in my world," replied Darrel. "Technically, it's called One Thousand and One Nights. This novel is based on a collection of Middle Eastern Folk Tales. Some of the stories that are considered favorable are Aladdin and the Cave of Wonders, and Ali baba and the Forty Thieves."

As the three return to the hotel, they hear a ruckus from across the street. "What's that?" Cronaxx asked. "Sounds like an angry mob," said Tint.

And he was right. They see Anne and Polly running through the streets from an angry mob. Darrel sighed, "What have these two gotten themselves into this time?" "Probably interrupted the parade," said Cronaxx. "There's a local parade that happens every year in this town."

"We gotta save them," said Tint. Darrel rolled his eyes, "Again." Darrel gives Cronaxx the carpet and tells him to meet up with the Plantars on the city tour bus that they've taken. Darrel taps his staff twice and the two magically transport themselves to the chase.

The two wizards went ahead of the crowd and caught up with the two victims. "I leave you alone for one morning, and you manage to cause trouble in the city?" Darrel asked. "Hey, it's not my fault that the tourism of this city is boring!" Anne cried. "Less talking, more running!" Polly screamed.

"I've got a plan," said Darrel. "Follow me! Tint, see if you can pick up half of the crowd." "You got it!" said Tint. Tint waves his hands and causes a bunch of rocks and crates to block the crowd. The kids reach a Y intersection and Tint takes Polly to the left while Anne and Darrel take the right.

"Any ideas, Darrel?" Anne asked. "Just one," replied Darrel. "Stay on your toes and try not to fall behind." Anne smirked at what he's planning, "You're not the kind of guy who causes trouble." "Only because I never got caught," said Darrel with a smirk. He takes her hand and the two run as the guards follow them close behind.

(One Jump Ahead - Aladdin)

The guards give chase to the two humans through the marketplace. Anne and Darrel jump carts, tumble through crowds, and create difficult obstacles for the guards to get through.

Gotta keep one jump ahead of the breadline

One swing ahead of the sword

I steal only what I can't afford

And that's everything

One jump ahead of the lawmen

That's all, and that's no joke

These guys don't appreciate I'm broke

Tint and Polly regroup with the humans and create an illusion of fireworks, scaring the crowd, but aweing the children.

Riff raff!

Street rat!

Scoundrel!

Take that!

Try a different tac', guys

Darrel points the three to the alleyway while he gets the guards' attention with his surprised pole vaulting. He reaches the second floor, taunting the guards with his agility.

Rip him open

'Round the back lines

I can take a hint, gotta face the facts

Could really use a friend or two

Darrel suddenly slips into a dance studio where ballet newts were practicing for a performance. The instructor did not like his sudden appearance.

(huh?)

Oh, it's sad, this creature's hit the bottom

He's become a one-man rise in crime

I'd blame parents, 'cept he hasn't got 'em

Gotta eat to live, gotta steal to eat

Tell you all about it when I got the time

Darrel jumps out the window as the guards enter the classroom to apprehend him. Darrel lands on the awnings for a safe landing. Anne, Tint, and Polly wait for him at the bottom. "You know there are stairs," said Anne. "Where's the fun in that?" Darrel asked.

One jump ahead of the slowpokes

One skip ahead of my doom

Next time gonna use a nom de plume

One jump ahead of the hitmen

One hit ahead of the flock

I think I'll take a stroll around the block

Stop, thief!

Vandal!

Hey Tint!

Scandal!

As the guards close in on them again, the four climb up to the rooftops. Darrel takes his staff and enchants a small love spell on one of the newts. She blocks off the guards for a few minutes.

Let's not be too hasty

Still I think he's rather tasty

Gotta eat to live, gotta steal to eat

Otherwise we'd get along (wrong!)

The four make haste on the rooftops. They even use large poles to vault across large gaps. Tint gets a glimpse of the tour bus. "Guys! It's over there. I can see Cronaxx with the boys." Darrel looks back to see the guards are still behind them. Then he gets an idea, "Tint, take the girls and go straight to the bus. I'll get the guards off your back." "You gonna be okay Darrel?" Polly asked. "They haven't caught me yet," replied Darrel.

One jump ahead of the hoofbeats

One hop ahead of the hump

One trick ahead of disaster

They're quick, but I'm much faster

Here goes

Better throw my hand in, wish me happy landin'

All I gotta do is jump!

Darrel takes a large lump sack and some rope. He jumps off the roof of a building and drops the sack down below. The guards look down to see the sack fall, mistaking it for Darrel. At the same time, Darrel used the rope to swing into the window and hide from the guards.

Soon after, he joins the group on the tour bus. "Hey, Hop pop. What did I miss on the tour?" Darrel asked. "Not so much, Darrel," replied Hop pop. "But we're about to head to our next stop: The Cheese Museum." Darrel smiled, "Cool! I have a lot of questions on how you guys make cheese here."

The next day, Darrel and the salamanders were outside the alleyway of the hotel. They surrounded the carpet Darrel selected the other day, preparing to enchant it. "Alright Darrel, are you ready to enchant your first item?" Cronaxx asked. "More than ever," replied Darrel.

Darrel takes his staff and gives off a glowing blue aura from the gemstone. The carpet was surrounded by the same aura and floats above Darrel's head. Darrel slams his staff to the ground and finishes the enchantment.

Darrel opens his eyes and takes a glance at his creation. "Wow, a magic carpet," he said. "This is truly amazing." The carpet looks to Darrel and reaches his tassel out for a handshake. "Pleasure to meet you, Carpet," said Darrel. "Let's see what you can do."

Darrel takes a seat on his carpet and the two take to the skies of Newtopia. Cronaxx and Tint watch in amazement. "That was amazing," said Tint. "Indeed," said Cronaxx. "I think you two are going to be a great team of wizards." "What about you?" Tint asked.

"I'm not as young as I used to be," replied Cronaxx. "But I know that I have faith in you two."

Later that day, back at the hotel room, Darrel prepares to surprise Anne with what he has done. "You ready for your big unveiling, Carpet?" Carpet gives a ready signal, and waits outside.

Anne and Sprig walk back in the hotel room after their brush with Newtopia University. "Hey Darrel," said Anne. "How was training today?" "It's all going swell," replied Darrel. He slowly backs up to the balcony of the hotel. "In fact, I did something fascinating that I want to share with you guys."

Darrel climbs on the railing and takes a step off. Anne was scared to watch, "NO!" Just then, Darrel's head poked up from the railing. "What?" "How are you doing that?" Sprig asked.

Darrel smiled and revealed how he's floating. "It's a magic carpet. I enchanted it myself, and he's developed a personality. It may not be the same as Clipper, but it's nice to have a riding companion."

Carpet shakes hands with Sprig and Anne. "Wow, that's really cool," said Sprig. "Anyone want to go for a ride?" Darrel asked. "We can get a bird's eye view of Newtopia with this thing."

Sprig yawned, "I'd like to, but I've just gotten back from a very long day of learning from Newtopia University." Sprig returns inside and drops face flat on the bed. Anne, however, was anticipated. "Is it safe?"

"Sure it is," said Darrel. He reaches his hand out for her. "Do you trust me?" Anne nodded, "Of course I do." She takes his hand and climbs on his magic carpet. "Hold on," said Darrel, and the carpet takes off into the skies of Newtopia.

Anne and Darrel look down at the streets of Newtopia with delight. "Been a long time since I've taken flight," said Darrel. Anne smiles and rests her head on his shoulder.

(A Whole New World - Aladdin)

Darrel:

I can show you the world

Shining, shimmering, splendid

Tell me, Boonchuy

Now, when did you last let your heart decide?

I can open your eyes

Take you wonder by wonder

Over, sideways and under

On a magic carpet ride

A whole new world

A new fantastic point of view

No one to tell us, "No"

Or where to go

Or say we're only dreaming

Anne:

A whole new world

A dazzling place I never knew

But when I'm way up here

It's crystal clear

That now I'm in a whole new world with you

Darrel: (Now I'm in a whole new world with you)

Unbelievable sights

Indescribable feeling

Soaring, tumbling, freewheeling

Through an endless diamond sky

A whole new world

Darrel: (Don't you dare close your eyes)

A hundred thousand things to see

Darrel: (Hold your breath, it gets better)

I'm like a shooting star

I've come so far

I can't go back to where I used to be

Darrel:

A whole new world

Anne: (Every turn, a surprise)

With new horizons to pursue

Anne: (Every moment, red-letter)

Both:

I'll chase them anywhere

There's time to spare

Let me share this whole new world with you

A whole new world

A whole new world

That's where we'll be

That's where we'll be

A thrilling chase

A wondrous place

For you and me

Darrel's carpet returns the two humans back to the balcony after an exciting ride around. "Thanks for the ride Darrel. I had a fun time," said Anne. "Anytime," said Darrel. Anne gives him a peck on the cheek and returns to her hotel room. Darrel remains outside looking at the rooftops of Newtopia.

The next day, the group entered the Newtopian markets, a place completely different from the farmer's market. "Woah," said Anne. "Look at this place, it's just like the outdoor megamall from back home." "I can see a resemblance," said Darrel.

"Alright kids," said Hop pop. "Since we only have a couple more days left in the city, I figured we can spend the afternoon shopping for souvenirs." The kids were happy to hear his announcement. "Get out there and buy anything you like!"

Suddenly, Darrel got a hunch that there's a catch to his statement. "Wait a minute," he said. "What's the catch?" Hop pop smiled, "You're a clever boy, Darrel I'll give you that." He reaches into his pocket and gives the group five small sacks. "You can buy anything with two coppers or less."

The kids were shocked by his statement. "What?! This ain't even enough for a candy bar!" Polly cried. "Yeah what gives?" Anne asked. "Let's just use that sweet bling bling from the king king." "Oh yeah, the royal credit card," said Sprig.

"Actually guys, I have to agree with Hop pop," said Tint. "Really?" Sprig asked. "He has a point," said Cronaxx. "Souvenirs are only meaningful when you purchase them yourselves."

"He's right," said Hop pop. "However you could always haggle with the shopkeepers." "What's that?" Darrel asked. "It is basically bargaining with shopkeepers until they lower their prices," explained Hop pop.

Polly was super excited, which made Hop pop scared. "Guess we better start looking, Uncle," said Tint. "Indeed," said Cronaxx. The two salamanders walk away to buy something.

"So Sprig, what are you gonna get for two coppers?" Darrel asked. "I don't know," said Sprig. "I'll probably get something for Ivy. Since we are an item. Who are you guys going to shop for?"

"My mom," replied Anne. Darrel was surprised. "You're going to shop for your mom too?" "Yeah," she said. "I figured if I'm gonna go missing in a different dimension, the least I could do is bring back a gift right?"

"Seems reasonable to me," said Sprig, carrying a stick with a price of two coppers. He swings it around, unintentionally breaking easily breakable pots. "Sorry sir!" Darrel cried out. "Put it on the Majesty's tab!"

Later in a souvenir shop, Anne, Darrel, and Sprig were looking for a perfect gift for their moms. "We got to find our gifts that are one of a kind," said Anne. "Something they'll truly remember," said Darrel.

"What do your mom's like, guys?" Sprig asked. "My mom likes antiques, butterflies, and making tea," said Anne. "My mom also

likes making tea, she even likes flowers, and dogs. But mostly she loves our family more than anything," said Darrel in a melancholic tone.

Anne starts to notice Darrel's small change in his behavior. "Are you okay, Darrel?" she asked. Darrel perked up when she grabbed his attention. "Y-Yeah, I'm fine. Let's just get what we came here for," he said.

The three keep looking for the perfect gift for Anne and Darrel's mother. Some of the gifts are either too ordinary, too creepy, or too expensive for two coppers. Then, Anne spots something from the other side of the store. "Hey, look over there!"

The three look at a poster of an antique butterfly tea pot made by a revered Newtopian artist. "That looks amazing," said Darrel. "Guys, it's perfect," said Anne. Considering that Anne saw the poster first, Darrel decided to let her have it.

He goes over to the store clerk in hopes of purchasing it. "Excuse me, how much is that antique teapot?" "Sorry, it's not for sale," said the store clerk. "What!?" Anne gasped. "No, 200 coppers. 600 coppers! I will pay 90,000 coppers!"

"Anne! Relax!" Darrel cried. "Now then, how come this item is not for sale, sir?" The store clerk reveals a flier of a derby, "It's not for sale because it's the grand prize for the market's annual Smash & Mash derby. If you want the teapot, you should sign up."

Anne wasted no breath and signed up for the derby. "You sure about this?" Sprig asked. "He may have a point," said Darrel. "We don't know what this competition is." "Guys, it's the perfect gift," said Anne. "This is the only way to get it. Nothing can stand in our way!"

Just then, a giant buff newt enters the shop. "Heh, that's what you think." Darrel stood behind staring up at the newt. "Wow, you're strong," he said. "Names Priscilla the Killa. Champion of the Smash and Mash Derby, 20 years running." Then she reveals a small blue

newt sitting on her shoulder. "This is my daughter Pearl." Darrel and Pearl wave hello.

"So, I guess it's no secret that you're signing up for the derby?" Darrel asked. "You betcha!" Priscilla roared. "That teapot is mine." Priscilla proceeds to sign up.

Darrel turns away from the strong newt and proceeds to find a perfect gift for his mother. Unable to find the right gift, Darrel takes out his phone and goes over photos of him and his family. Darrel smiled when he saw a family vacation photo that consists of him, his parents, and his sisters.

He looks back to that photo and recalls it to be the best day of his life. He and his family went to a very popular theme park. He and his father went on their favorite haunted house ride, singing the theme song the whole way. His sisters enjoyed the food at the local restaurants. At one time, he was chasing his youngest sister across the park simply because she was on a sugar rush. And finally, he and his mother were enjoying the parades and the firework shows.

That photo made him drop a few tears on his phone. He touches his mother's face on the screen and says, "I'll find you the perfect gift, mom. I promise." He puts away his phone and prepares to leave the shop. He turns around to see that Anne and Sprig are preparing to participate in the derby. But he chooses to follow through with finding his gift for her.

As the day progressed, he stumbled on finding the right one. He went to the ceramic gift shop, but there wasn't anything that related to his mother. He went to the pet shop to find something dog related, but realized that the pets the amphibians have are spiders and caterpillars. And finally, we went to the Newtopian greenhouse for a special flower for his mom. But, most of the wildflowers were close to eating him, so he escaped freezing the carnivorous plants.

Darrel is then sitting on a bench overlooking the water outside of town. The salamanders find Darrel just sitting there all alone. "Hey

Darrel," said Tint. Darrel turns his head and finds Tint with his souvenir, a jar of fresh algae. "Hey Tint," said Darrel. "Any luck finding your souvenir?" Cronaxx asked.

Darrel shook his head, "I was hoping I could find the perfect gift for my mom." Tint suddenly felt his heart drop when Darrel mentioned his mother. He slowly walks up to him and places his hand on his. "It's not too late," he said. "We can help you find one. Right Uncle?" Cronaxx nodded, "Of course we can."

"I don't know what to tell you," said Darrel. "I've tried every place that could have the perfect gift for my mother." Then, out of nowhere, the trio of wizards hear crowds roaring not far from them.

"Sounds like the derby is getting interesting," said Tint. "Let's go check it out," said Darrel. "Maybe I'll find the perfect gift along the way." Darrel, Tint, and Cronaxx set off to watch the Smash and Mash Derby.

The three make it just in time for Anne and Priscilla to go head to head in the finals. Darrel was cheering Anne on, until the two brawled outside the arena. "Is that even legal?" Darrel asked. "It's a derby," said Cronaxx. "Anything goes as long as they try to knock each other out."

Before they knew it, Priscilla was knocked out when she stopped for Polly. Anne was declared the winner, and the crowd cheered. Darrel created a light show that said, 'Congratulations Winners!'

Anne and Sprig cheered when they got the teapot. Anne was given a victory hug by Darrel. "That was amazing Anne," he said "Sorry I didn't see the whole thing." Anne returned the hug, "It's okay Darrel, cause I finally got the teapot for my mom."

"Hey Mop Top," said Priscilla. She walks over to Anne and Sprig and offers her a handshake. "Congratulations, you won fair and square," Anne accepts the handshake, "Oh, uh, thanks." "Just make sure you

take care of that thing, okay?" Priscilla asked. "The newt who made it was special."

Looking back at the poster, Darrel started putting the pieces together. "That teapot really means that much to you doesn't it?" "It's one of a kind," said Priscilla. "And your last name happens to be Paddock?" Darrel asked. "Yeah," said Priscilla.

Anne started to put the pieces together as well. "Was the artist who made the teapot your mother?" she asked. "Yeah," said Priscilla. "I was going to give this to my mom when I got home," said Anne. Then, out of generosity, she gives Priscilla her rightful heirloom. "But I think she would want you to have it."

Priscilla didn't know what to say about her generosity. But she gracefully accepted her teapot back. "Thank you," she said. "This means so much to us. You're not half bad, Mop Top." "Anne," corrected Darrel. "Her name is Anne."

Thanks to her kindness, Pearl decided to give Anne something in return. She gives Anne her crafted butterfly sculpture, and the three hug it out. "That's what I call a perfect gift," said Darrel. "Now all that's left for me is to find a gift for my mom."

Tint approaches Darrel and says, "Hey Darrel. I think I found the perfect gift for your mother." Darrel turned around and said, "Lead the way buddy. Anne we'll meet you and the Plantars back at the hotel." Anne nodded and reconvened to where Hop pop was.

Back with Darrel and the Salamanders, the three approach a craft shop and find a glittering red rose on the display window. Darrel gazed in its glory, then suddenly recalled another memory from the amusement park.

Darrel and his mother were watching one of the scheduled parades from the parks they were visiting. They looked to a float that had a beautiful woman, with a strange creature dressed formally, standing behind a red rose. "They're my favorite couple, Darrel. Because they

taught me never to be deceived by appearances, that beauty is found within." Darrel smiled and watched as the float passed the crowd.

"It's perfect," said Darrel. "I'll take it." Darrel enters the store and gives the clerk his two coppers as a purchase for the crafted rose. The clerk was pleased with the purchase.

Later that night, the amphibians were asleep in their hotel room. Suddenly, Sprig woke up from a bad dream, waking Tint up in the process. The two look outside to see Anne and Darrel on the balcony looking at their gifts for their mothers.

The two come outside and keep their humans company. "Those are really pretty," said Sprig. "I'm sure your moms are going to love it." The humans remained quiet. "So, what are your mothers like?" Tint asked.

Anne broke the silence and gave her answer, "Kind, in her own way. But strict too. She wanted me to study more, she thought I goofed off too much. We didn't always see eye to eye. She annoyed me sometimes too. Like, in the kitchen, she'd always sing these goofy Thai love songs, and, man, was her singing bad. Woof! That woman was beyond tone-deaf." She started laughing, until her friends could see tears in her eyes. "You know, the funny thing is, right now I would give anything just to hear her singing."

"What about you Darrel?" Sprig asked. "What's your mother like?" Darrel stared down at his gift and took a deep breath. "My mom is the most amazing person in my life. She's always there for me whenever I'm scared or upset. There were times when she wouldn't want me to do things for myself. Like this one time I wanted to sit by myself on a train ride, but she wanted to sit next to me because she wanted to share every moment with me. She was like a leech, always wanting to let me know that she loves me."

The next part was when Darrel's lips started to shake. "That was before...." He couldn't finish his sentence when he started crying.

Tint and Sprig were very concerned with him bottling his emotions. Anne placed a hand on her shoulder before Darrel could speak up. "... before she grew sick."

The three friends were surprised. "I never told this to anyone, especially you Anne. I didn't want you to worry. It was a couple years ago. Before we started the sixth grade, My mother started feeling under the weather for a while. Dad had to take her to the hospital to run some tests. When she came back, she kept smiling for all of us. She told us not to worry about what's going on."

"However, one night, I couldn't sleep. I could overhear mom on the phone with the doctors. I carefully kept myself in earshot to find out what's going on. And then my worst fears have been realized. My mom was diagnosed with stage 3 pancreatic cancer."

Anne was most upset with Darrel's situation, "I'm so sorry about your mom, Darrel." Anne now realizes that Darrel has his own reasons why he has to get back home. To be there for his family. "She's been fighting it like a warrior," said Darrel. "When she discovered that I found out, she told me she was going to fight it to the best she can. And she told me that no matter how hard life gets, she'll be there to catch me."

The three remained silent as he kept talking, "But I was no fool, I knew that one day she was going to leave us. Just like my grandfather. Now that I'm here, I'm scared out of my life. Because I don't know what's happening to my family, my sisters, my dad, and..." Darrel's eyes continue to water. "If anything happens to my mom and I wasn't there, I will never forgive myself."

Looking over his shoulder, realizing who he had been talking to, Darrel tries to regain his composure. "I'm sorry guys, I get really deep in these situations." Darrel suddenly feels a tight grip, revealing Anne was hugging him. "I'm so sorry this is happening to you," she said.

"You're lucky you got to know your moms," said Tint. "I lost mine before I was even hatched." Now it was Darrel's turn to hear Tint's mother. "She always looked up to Uncle Cronaxx, which made him smile. Cronaxx told me she died protecting me, then took me in when my father went to war. It was only when I hatched from my egg that Cronaxx realized my father wasn't coming back."

Darrel was upset with his story, "I'm so sorry Tint." Darrel proceeds to hug his salamander friend, and Tint embraces it. "Thank you, Darrel Loyaltat." Sprig looks down at his hat and knows that it's his turn to tell his story.

"My mom passed away when me and Polly were young," he said. "I don't even remember what she looked like, much less the sound of her voice." "When did this conversation get so sad?" Tint asked. "You know, I've always wondered," continued Sprig. "Can you miss someone you never actually knew?"

Sprig soon lets out a small chuckle, "That's silly. I mean of course you can't." Suddenly, Sprig was ambushed by Anne, Darrel, and Tint, hugging the poor frog who immediately started crying. "Of course you can, Sprig," said Darrel. "It just shows how much good you have in your heart," said Tint.

Before the group goes back to sleep, Darrel creates a light illusion, showing his mother and Anne's mother. They look up at the sky pattern and smile tearfully. Then, Darrel begins to sing.

(My Mother - The Chipettes)

Darrel :

It's hard to remember

Summer or winter

When she hasn't been there for me

A friend and companion
I can always depend on
My mother, that's who I mean

Anne:

I've taken for granted
Seeds that she's planted
She's always behind everything
A teacher, a seeker
A both-arms-outreacher
My mother, that's who I mean

Darrel:

Wish I could slow down the hands of time
Keep things the way they are

Anne:

If she said so, I would give her the world
If I could, I would

Darrel:

My love and my laughter
From here ever after
Is all that she says that she needs

Darrel & Anne:

A friend and companion

I can always depend on

My mother, that's who I mean

My mother, that's who I mean

That's who I mean

The four watch as the light illusion fades away, and then return inside the hotel room to sleep for the rest of the night.

This is by far one of the longest chapters I have written for this fanfiction so far.

The Sleepover to End All Sleepovers

Chapter 33 - The Sleepover to end all Sleepovers

While the group enjoyed the sights of Newtopia, Marcy and King Andrias were trying to find more information about the music box. Eventually, they come across important information that the whole group should hear. So, Marcy invited Anne, Darrel, Tint, Sprig, and Polly to spend the night at the castle before the big meeting, which they all agreed to.

Night time arrives in Amphibia, and Marcy was getting her place ready for her friends. As she watered her plants, a knock on the door was heard. She rushed over with excitement and opened her door. Standing on the other side was Lady Olivia.

"Good evening, Master Marcy," she said. "Anne Boonchuy, Darrel Loyalitat, Tint Tormak, and the Plantars have arrived for your-" "Sleepover!" cried the kids as they rushed in wearing their night gear. All hopped up with excitement, they were all over Marcy's bedroom.

"Sleepover," finished Lady Olivia. "If anyone needs me, I'll be in the kitchen drinking... juice." "Thank you, Lady Olivia," said Darrel. Lady Olivia hid a smile as she walked out of the room.

Anne rushes in to hug Marcy. "This is going to be," "Awesome!" said Anne and Marcy. "It's the perfect way to spend the night before we hear from the king," said Sprig. "I wonder what he learned about the music box," said Anne.

"I hope it's enough to know how to get you guys back home," said Tint. "I don't want to give anything away," said Marcy. "But it's going to be pretty cool." Tint nods in agreement.

Hop pop and Cronaxx appear from outside the door. "Okay kids," said Hop pop. "We'll be back in the morning for our meeting with the

king." "You all enjoy yourselves," said Cronaxx. "Me and Hop pop will be having some much needed, us time."

Cronaxx walks out just as Hop pop spoke up. "And by me time, I mean a full body-" Not wanting to hear anymore, Sprig and Polly slam the door on their grandfather. "Woo-hoo!" Polly cried. "Me and Sprig's first sleepover!" "Hey, don't forget this is probably Tint's first sleepover too," said Sprig. "Well, I'm a traveling salamander," said Tint. "But, I'll consider this my first one. Let's make it good." "These will be formative memories," said Sprig in a haunting tone.

"Woah," said Anne. "I just realized, we've never done a sleepover without Sasha." "Oh, you're right," said Marcy. "You think we can pull it off? Sasha's the sleepover queen. Not us." "Hey, you guys are the best of friends," said Darrel. "I believe that you can pull it off. Who says there has to be one queen?"

"Everyone, that's sort of how the whole system works Darrel," said Marcy. "Marcy, you, Anne, and Sasha have done tons of sleepovers," said Darrel. "As far as I'm concerned you guys know everything."

Anne and Marcy smiled at each other and said in sync, "Pajamas, junk food and gossip galore. Pillow fights, movies and tearing up the dance floor. And listen up 'cause this I won't repeat, never ever go to sleep."

Darrel smiled, "What did I tell you? We're gonna be just fine." "Sensing some missing context here," said Sprig. "Oh sorry, Sasha always said falling asleep early means total failure," said Marcy. "A true sleepover goes until sunrise."

"That sounds like a challenge," said Tint. "Enough setup," said Anne. "Let's get this sleepover on baby. The kids cheer and get their party on."

Throughout the night, the kids were all over the castle. They surfed down the stairs on mattresses crashing into knight armor. They

dressed up in the king's clothing in his wardrobe, angering Lady Olivia for being fooled. Then they sprayed silly string on her in the study.

Lady Olivia couldn't take much of it, so she knocked them down with her surprising martial arts skills. "While I'm glad you kids are having fun. Let me remind you that some castle rooms are off limits, namely the basement."

"Hear you loud and clear, Lady Olivia," said Darrel. "In the meantime," he immediately sprays her with a hidden silly string. "Montage is back on!"

Soon the gang had a pillow fight, raided the castle kitchen, and painted mustaches on paintings in the hall gallery. The gang never had this much fun in a long time. Later that night, the group laid on their sleeping bags. Exhausted from all the running, laughing, and feasting.

"Whew, that was awesome," said Tint. "Best sleepover ever," said Sprig. "Told you you guys could pull this off without Sasha," said Darrel. "You were right," said Anne. "What time is it anyway? 5:00 am? 6:00am?"

Marcy takes out her phone revealing the time to be 9:00 pm. "Only 9:00 pm?!" "What?!" Anne and Darrel perked up hearing that fact. "I had no idea we'd done so much, in so little time," said Darrel. "But I'm still tired," said Polly.

Anne gathers their amphibian friends and shakes them awake. "Alright! I'm up!" said Tint. "Don't you guys do anything else at these sleepovers?" Darrel asked. "Well, there is one thing," said Marcy. "Anne, I think it's time."

"Do you think they're ready?" she asked. "Is anyone ever really ready, Anne?" "Ready for what?" the group asked. Darrel was concerned with what they were planning on doing, but mostly terrified.

His fears suddenly perked when the lights went out and Anne and Marcy shined a light under their faces. "The Scare Dare Challenge," they said. Darrel and Tint perk up hearing the term scare in this event. 'Who would have a hard time sleeping with fear in control of your mind?' they thought.

"Okay, the rules are simple," said Marcy. "One of us comes up with a scary dare and we all have to do it." Anne announced the catch, "But, whoever bails first gets their name added to," "The Book of Losers!" Marcy finished.

The four friends gasped. Anne continues her rule, "And once your name is in the Book of Losers, it'll be there forever." "Woah," gasped Darrel. He didn't know that his three friends do this every time they get together for the night. Now that he got a taste of what to expect, he grins with excitement. "I'm in," he said. He was followed by Tint and the Plantars, "Let's do this!" "I'm sold." "Count me in too."

"Okay," said Marcy. "All we need is a scary dare." The group gets down to thinking of coming up with a scary dare. They took their time, but they haven't come up with anything. "Yeah, I got nada," said Sprig.

"I don't remember being this difficult," said Anne. "That's because Sasha's always came up with the best scare dares," said Marcy. Suddenly, Darrel got an idea.

"I may not be Sasha, but I think I got the best Scare Dare Challenge." He walks over to the map of the castle, staff in hand. "Every time I visit my cousins, we play hide and seek in the basement with the lights out. And when I'm it, my cousins and sisters never felt more scared in their lives."

Marcy grew anxious about where Darrel was going with his challenge. "I don't know Darrel, the basement is off limits for a reason. This may not be a smart idea."

"Maybe, but I know for a fact that it sounds like something Sasha would do," said Darrel. "That is true," said Anne. "Therefore, I hereby announce that the Scare Dare Challenge is to explore the basement of the Newtopian Castle!" Darrel announced. "Do you five accept the challenge?"

"I hereby accept the scare dare challenge," said Marcy. "We also accept the scare dare challenge," said Sprig, Tint, and Polly. "Anne, you in?" Darrel asked. Anne smiled, "I accept!" "The challenge is accepted and official!"

The group sneaks past Lady Olivia sleeping with a glass in her hand. Polly, however, takes a marker and prepares to draw a mustache on her. The group head downstairs into the cellar, and find a trapdoor leading to the basement. "Woah," the group exclaimed.

The group sees another stairway leading deeper into the dark. "So, who wants to go first?" Sprig asked in a minor scared tone. "I vote for Darrel," Polly said immediately. "Hey!" Darrel exclaimed. "It was your idea," said Marcy.

Darrel grew a bit anxious, but then took a deep breath. "Alright, stay close and don't hold up. Cause I'm not stopping." Darrel takes his staff and the gem gives off a tint glow to see in the dark.

As the group descend into the dark, Marcy trips and falls down the stairs. She stops at the bottom and gets scared seeing a moth. She gets up then gets scared by the group, who get scared back.

"Okay that's enough," said Anne. The group looks in the hallway to find a bunch of mirrors. "Woah, that's a lot of mirrors," said Sprig. The group grows anxious at the scenery. "You know, we can always turn back," said Darrel. "Insert our names in the Book of Losers." The group however didn't want to be losers, "Nah."

The group ventures deeper into the hall. Slowly, but surely, they started to question their choice of ever accepting this challenge. "You know," said Tint. "I read in books that mirrors can ward off ancient

spirits, and summon them." This statement gave Marcy the opportunity to laugh maniacally.

Eventually, the kids reach a dead end. A door boarded up with Amphibian language. "Uh, what does it say?" Anne asked. "Allow me," said Darrel. He takes his staff, and the language glows. It rewrites itself in the English language saying 'Keep Out.' "Nice work Darrel," said Marcy. "You're really getting the hang of this magic training." "What can I say, I'm a natural listener," said Darrel.

Hearing a creak on the other side, everyone jumped. "So, does anyone still want to turn back?" Tint asked. Sprig and Polly shivered in fear, "I ain't going in no Book of Losers." "Me neither."

"Guess we'll go a bit further then," said Marcy. "Living our best lives right now," said Anne. "Well, if you all insist," said Darrel. He takes his staff and telepathically removes the wood from the door. Before he could reach for it, Anne grasps his hand. The two look and nod to keep going. Aware that they really don't want to.

The door opens revealing a flooded crypt, with tombstones floating in the water. "Anne, Darrel, we shouldn't be here," said Marcy. "This feels all sorts of wrong." "I agree," said Darrel. "Me too," said Anne. "Guys. I'm calling it. The challenge is over. Let's get out of here."

Sprig and Polly took this as an opportunity to win the challenge. "Oh I see," said Sprig. "I guess you four are okay with going in..." "The Book of Losers!" The two siblings mocked.

"I am not a loser," said Tint. "I can last longer than these humans." "Oh those are fighting words," said Darrel. "Anyone else want in?" "Uh, sure," said Anne. "It's just that this place isn't our style."

"Okay, prove it," said Sprig. "Take a selfie by that coffin." Sprig points to the coffin by the end of the room. "If I know Sasha, I know she would always jump at the chance," said Darrel.

The three humans approach the crypt with caution and prepare their selfie. They take the photo and view it. "Nailed it," said Anne. "Wait. The photo looks kinda jank."

Suddenly, they watch as their photo glows. Then, a strange ghost like creature appears in front of them. The three humans scream their heads off. Then, the crypt started glowing below them. And more of the ghost like creatures appear before them, in many shapes and sizes.

"What are these things?" Anne asked. "They look kinda cute," said Sprig. "Sprig! Don't touch them!" Tint cried. He points to one of the creatures with a frog skeleton inside. Indicating that these creatures eat amphibians.

The amphibian kids scream and make their way out of the crypt, surrendering the challenge. "I don't get it," said Anne. "Are they aliens? Ghosts?" "Does it matter?" Marcy asked. "Let's get out of here Scoob and Shag!"

"Wait, what did you call us?" Darrel asked. His question was interrupted when their entrance was blocked by one of the creatures. "Guys!" Tint cried. "This way! We found another exit!"

The kids rush out with all their speed, and the creatures slowly behind them. They rushed through hallways filled with mirrors, however the creatures didn't follow them directly. Instead they phase through the floor.

The kids then come across a room filled with plants, they were shown to be fresh and alive. "How are these plants growing without sunlight?" Marcy asked. Anne took her hand and said, "Mar-Mar, we don't have time for this. Come on!"

Then they pass a discarded portrait, which catches Sprig, Tint, and Polly's attention. "Woah, someone really hated this painting," said Sprig. Tint looks closely at the portrait and spots something familiar.

He fixes a part of the painting and sees a younger version of Cronaxx. "Uncle Cronaxx?"

"Hurry up!" Polly cried as she dragged both the frog and salamander away from the creatures. The group reach another stairwell and open a trapdoor at the top. The group reach the other side, only to reveal they return to Marcy's quarters.

"My room?" Marcy asked. "Don't question it!" Sprig cried as he closed the door. Darrel kept his guard up with his staff, "Don't ease up guys, they're still behind us."

And he was right, the creatures phase through the trap door. Darrel blasts them with a light beam, but the spell phases through the creatures. Tint shoots fire from them, but to no avail. Sprig blocks the fire with a mirror, and somehow, the mirror reflects on one of the creatures.

The creature suddenly loses its glow and falls flat on the ground. Marcy takes her pillow and hits the creature. "It's physical, but how?" Marcy asked. "The mirror!" Tint exclaimed. Darrel instantly remembered when they were being chased, and got an idea. "Grab a mirror guys!" He throws a few mirrors to his friends and they start pointing them at the creatures.

Anne looks to a mirror and is surprised, "Hey, was anyone going to tell me I have leaves in my hair?" Darrel looks at her reflection, then looks at his own. "You have leaves. But I've got twigs in my hair? I look like a deer with these on."

"Not now you two!" Their friends cried. "Right!" After that, the group fights off the creatures and seals them away. Blocking the door from them entering again. "So, does anyone think they're going to sleep after that terrifying experience?" Marcy asked. The whole group agreed that they wouldn't.

Darrel looks to the time and learns that it's almost 3:00 am. "Oh boy, 3 am!" He takes out a sack of mushrooms and snacks on some.

"Want any, guys?" "No thanks," his friends said. "We still have a few hours left until sunrise," said Polly. "What should we do next?"

Suddenly, Darrel got an idea. "Hey Marcy, I think now would it be a good idea to play Creatures and Caverns, this time in real life." Marcy gasped with excitement. "I'll get ready!" Just as the game was set, Darrel used his magic to transport them to the world she created.

The group enjoyed the fantasy world, up until they finished in record time. Which of course, was three hours. Marcy's phone went off as the sun began to rise. The group grew tired, but they felt accomplished. "We did it," said Sprig. "We stayed awake all night," said Polly.

"I still have so many questions," said Marcy. "Like what were those things? What's the deal with the basement? And if those were really ghosts, is there actually an afterlife?" "I didn't even think about that," said Anne. "Some things are best left unanswered," said Darrel.

"Well one thing's for sure," said Tint. "This sleepover was amazing!" Darrel smiled with Tint's cheerfulness. "Hey Darrel," said Marcy. "What did you think?" "Definitely amazing," replied Darrel.

Sprig reaches over to grab the Book of Losers, "I just wish I didn't have to add my name to the Book of Losers." Darrel looks glum, until, "Make room for my name Sprig. I was just as scared as you were." Eventually, Polly, Tint, Anne, and Marcy signed in their names too. "It's not the first time I signed in," said Marcy.

"For real?" Polly asked. Sprig flips over to previous pages, revealing Anne and Marcy's names, signed in from previous challenges. "The only one brave enough to not get in the books was Sasha," said Marcy.

Not seeing her name made Darrel sigh, "I can't help but think back what I said to her. I broke up with her in front of a crowd, and that

has to be embarrassing." "We have to make things right with Sasha," said Anne. "And we will, guys," said Marcy. "I just know it."

Suddenly they hear a knock on the door, and the group, except for Darrel, hide in the covers. He opens the door with little suspense until he sees Lady Olivia hopping with anger, and hair all messed up. "Lady Olivia, Good morning," said Darrel.

"Is it good?" Lady Olivia asked. She reveals a mustache and chin strap drawn on her face, and the statement, 'Polly Wuz Here' on her eyelids. "Because of you kids, I barely slept a wink last night. Well whatever, it's go time!"

"For what?" Darrel asked. "Your audience with King Andrias is about to begin," replied Lady Olivia. "Get ready!" Then she slams the doors, leaving Darrel stunned. Then, the rest of the group started to laugh.

"You guys should've seen her face when she's mad," said Darrel. Then out of nowhere, a small ghost-like creature appeared in front of them, scaring them in the sunrise.

A Day at the Aquarium

Chapter 34 - A Day at the Aquarium

Shortly after the kids' sleepover, they arrive at King Andrias' throne room. The kids were still shown to be tired. Hop pop and Cronaxx looked refreshed and relaxed. Lady Olivia was still peeved about the kids' behavior last night. One of the Newtopian guards gave Lady Olivia a handkerchief to wipe off the marker Polly left on her face.

King Andrias waits impatiently for the group to arrive in his throne room. Darrel shakes off the tiredness and bows directly, "King Andrias, it is a pleasure to see you again!" "Again with the formalities, Darrel. Please take a load off." Darrel gets up, nodding to the King's wishes. "Wonderful to see you all again," said King Andrias. The rest of the group nodded in agreement.

"So I trust that you found more information about the box?" Cronaxx asked. King Andrias jumped a bit in excitement. Very anxious to tell his new found friends about what he and Marcy have discovered. "Oh, I sure did Croney ol' buddy." he takes out a huge green book with the four gemstones on the cover. "Ta-da! Take a gander."

The group looks in the large book and finds the box on one of the pages. "It's the music box," said Sprig. "What have you learned about this, your majesty?" Tint asked. King Andrias sits on his knees and explains.

"According to this book, it's a magical artifact that is thousands of years old. Apparently, my ancestors used it to visit entirely different worlds. They were peaceful explorers, scientists if you will. And, there was an amphibian who came up with this idea in the first place, but their name is unknown in the records."

He points to the box with the four grey gemstones. "These four stones are the key to getting it working again. They need to be

recharged." "Recharged?" Anne asked. "That's why Cronaxx said the box was empty," said Darrel. "The box contained the stone's energy."

"How do we get them recharged, your majesty?" Tint asked. "The book mentions four different temples," said King Andrias. "Each channeling a different kind of energy. And once the stones are recharged..."

King Andrias proceeds to turn the page until, "We'll have a way home?!" Anne interrupted. The king was a bit displeased, but perked up his positivity again. "Steal my thunder, why don't you? But Yes!"

The king flips the page and shows the four gemstones recharged and a small map that leads to many other worlds. "This is amazing!" Darrel cried. "This is our one chance to get back home!"

The three humans cheered with excitement. "Now let's get out there and conquer those bad boys!" Marcy exclaimed. However, King Andrias stopped them in their tracks. "Woah, let's rein those snails in for a second. The book only gives the location of one temple."

Darrel looks at the book and realizes the king was right. Then, he realized something else. That the book doesn't show the fourth temple. This got Darrel confused, "This book shows only three temples. Where's the fourth?"

"Apparently, it was only discovered by one explorer," said King Andrias. "And he kept the location hidden. Other explorers tried to retrace his steps, but to no avail." Darrel was amazed, "Wow, a mysterious temple only to be discovered by one amphibian."

"But even if you have the location of the temple, you still have a lot of preparation to do before you set off," said King Andrias. "Good point," said Marcy. "Gotta get equipped for a mega quest like this: Armor to buy, maps to study, weapons to forge. This is going to take a few days."

"A few days?" Hop pop asked. "I hate to say it but we really got to get back to Wartwood." "You sure, Hop pop?" Darrel asked. "Absolutely," replied Hop pop. "The harvest is coming up and we can't miss it."

"I can understand, Hop pop," said Cronaxx. "One's journey is where the heart lies." "So, how are we going to play this out?" Tint asked. "I guess me and the Plantars will head back to Wartwood," replied Anne. "And when Marcy's ready, we can just meet up."

"Wait, wait, wait," said Darrel. "Are you saying that it's okay for me to stay with Marcy while you guys go back?" "Actually," said Marcy. "It doesn't make sense for any of you to go back to Wartwood."

Darrel and Anne were shocked by her statement, especially their amphibian friends. "Marcy, what are you talking about?" Darrel asked. "The last thing we should do is separate again," she replied. "Now that we're so close to finding our way home."

"I guess that's true," said Anne uncomfortably. "But," said Darrel. "What if we went back to get the box?" "Nonsense," shrugged Marcy. "Once Hop pop gets the box back, we'll just send a servant to pick it up. More efficient that way."

The two humans look over to the Plantars, with sad looks on their faces. "Sounds efficient, but it feels wrong," said Darrel. "Maybe..." said Anne. "Guys," said Marcy. "Right now, you have to follow your heads. Not your hearts. If the salamanders want to go back with them, that's okay. They all got you here, to me. It's time to let them go back to their lives."

Feeling down about this, Darrel and Anne take a breather. Marcy agrees to give them a day to say goodbye. King Andrias looks at how they're about ready to cry. "You folks want a giant tissue?" he asked. "To go, please," said Tint. "Coming right up," said King Andrias.

Back at the hotel, Darrel paced back and forth. Anne and the Plantars use King Andrias' tissue. Darrel grows a bit angry at the fact that he has to let go of his salamander friends. "It just doesn't feel right," he said. "Oh, come on," said Anne. "It's not like this is goodbye forever."

"Anne's right, gang," said Hop pop. He takes out the map of Newtopia and places it on the table. "The least we could do is have one last day together. Now come on, let's pick an activity."

The gang look for fun activities to do for one last day in Newtopia. Hop pop points out an aquarium in Newtopia, and Anne agrees to it. "Anytime I was feeling gloomy back home, the aquarium will always make me feel better," she said. "Sounds like a good idea," said Darrel. "The aquarium makes me empty my mind and focus on the beauty of nature under the water."

Eventually, the gang goes to the local aquarium. Inside the aquarium, kids were enjoying the sight of fish, taking photos of skeletons from different time zones, and running to other exhibits. Darrel, Anne, the Plantars, and the Salamanders were watching beaver bugs working on a dam.

Suddenly, a lake leech popped out of the water, scaring the group. "Woah, is that a lake leech?" Darrel asked. "Hey, yeah," said Hop pop. "This reminds me of the river lampreys that attacked the kids when the basement flooded." "I don't remember that," said Tint. "Maybe that's because you guys weren't there," said Polly.

Darrel looks over to Anne and Sprig who look glum. Darrel starts getting really upset with how Marcy is trying to separate good friends. "Let's move on to the next exhibit," said Cronaxx.

"Okay, if we're gonna have a sadness-free day, we need to avoid anything that might trigger our very delicate emotional states," said Hop pop. "I know just the place," said Darrel. The gang proceed to an exhibit filled with jellyfish. "Jellyfish, the most beautiful creature known to empty the mind."

Suddenly, a large kraken swims by, and the group remembers the time that a kraken almost destroyed Stumpy's restaurant. Worried that everyone is going to get upset, Cronaxx guides the group into the marine geology exhibit. Then, the group looks at coral displays that look like Hop pop's cane, to Domino 2, to Zapapedes, and the annual Wartwood grubhog.

"Hey Darrel, come look at this," said Tint. Darrel approaches where Tint was, then he suddenly stops in his tracks and gazes at a coral. One that looks just like Clipper. "That looks just like Clipper," said Tint. "Indeed it does," said Cronaxx. He looks over to Darrel with a glum look on his face. He clenches his fists and looks down. "I still miss him so much," he said.

"I know, Darrel," said Cronaxx. "And I'm sure he misses you too. Your connection with Clipper came from the magic in your heart. I don't think there's any reason Clipper would ever forget about you." Darrel goes to hug Cronaxx, "Thanks Cronaxx."

Darrel looks to see Anne and the Plantars really crying their hearts out. "This is obviously unfair," he said. "We've got to do something about this," said Tint.

"I may have a suggestion, if it'll get them to stop causing a scene in here," said the security guard. "What is it?" Sprig asked. "If you guys are feeling blue, there's always the Stingray Stage Show." "That sounds like a good idea," said Hop pop.

At the stage show, the gang watches as a couple of trained stingrays jump out of the water like dolphins. "And now," the announcer began. "For the main event, I'd like a volunteer from the audience."

Sprig puts his hand up and is invited down to the stage. The announcer instructs Sprig to hold out a fish in front of the tank for their special guest. "Everyone, give it up for Wanda the Water Snake!"

Just then, a large snake pops out of the water, making Darrel shake as the snake opens its mouth. "Well that's pretty cool," said Hop pop. Then he looks to Darrel with a shocked look on his face. "Darrel, what's wrong?" "I also happen to have a fear of snakes," said Darrel. "And the fact that this is bigger than an anaconda, makes me uncomfortable."

He looks to Anne and sees her crying, "You scared of snakes too Anne?" he asked. "No it's just that this snake reminds me of the time a different snake almost ate me and Sprig," she replied. She shows them a photo of Sprig flexing while a pair of eyes pop out of the water.

"What?! When?" Hop pop asked. "About the time you locked me in the house," Anne cried. Seeing Anne cry over everything that the Plantars ever did together, suddenly made Darrel lose his focus on the snake. The group come together and embrace their sadness, and Sprig's outburst scares the snake. The sudden splash destroys the plank and Sprig falls into the water.

The snake swims away just as the stingrays surround Sprig. The group arrived just as the announcer claimed that the snake was harmless. But the sting rays are a different story, for they love the taste of frog flesh.

Thankfully, Darrel casted a levitation spell and brought Sprig back to safety. But then, the stingrays prepare to dive at them. So Cronaxx and Tint push them back into the wild using their magic.

The group celebrated, then got kicked out at the same time. "Oh man, that was classic," said Sprig. "We stung those sting rays!" said Tint. "Well, we didn't have a relaxing day at the aquarium," said Anne. "But now we've got another perfectly us memory to cherish," said Cronaxx.

The group laughed it off, but then Darrel started thinking. He believed that by being with the Plantars and the Salamanders, he had more fun than he could ever imagine. Then he recalled a

memory of what Cronaxx said to him. He told Darrel this simple statement. 'A wizard's journey is where the heart takes them.' By keeping that statement in his heart, he realized what he had to do.

"Plantars," said Darrel. "Yeah, Darrel?" said Sprig. "I don't care what Marcy said," said Darrel. "My head is telling me to listen to my heart. And my heart is telling me to go back to Wartwood." The group was shocked, but happy to hear about it. "Darrel are you sure?" Hop pop asked. "Indeed I am," said Darrel. "I want to say goodbye not like this, but at the very moment we get our passage home."

"But Darrel, what about Marcy?" Anne asked. "She needs to understand how important our amphibious friends are to us," replied Darrel. "I want to spend every moment with my salamandrian friends as much as possible. After all, how much longer are we going to be here anyway?" The gang ponders over Darrel's answer as they head back to the hotel.

The next day, before the sun began to rise, The Plantars and the Salamanders were packing up to return to Wartwood. "That's the last of our luggage," said Tint. He looks to Darrel with a ready look on his face. The two secretly nodded.

"Have a safe trip back, guys," said Marcy. "Let us know when you get the music box, and we'll send someone to come get it." At that moment, Darrel proceeded to drop his bags in the fwagon, surprising Marcy.

"Darrel, what are you doing?" she asked. "I'm taking your advice, and using my head," replied Darrel. "And my head is telling me to follow my heart. And my heart is telling me that I'm going with the Plantars."

Marcy was uneasy with his choice, "Darrel that's not what I meant." "Well like it or not, I've grown very fond of my friends," said Darrel. "I know we have to return home, and I have my own reasons. But if we're doing this, I'm doing it with my friends. Because only then, will it be a real adventure."

The amphibians, and Anne smiled at his statement. "And I'm not going to let you cut them from my life," concluded Darrel. "They mean a lot to me." Marcy was completely stunned by his speech that she remained quiet.

"If you're going with them..." said Anne. She reaches out for a hug from Darrel and the amphibians. "... Then I guess I'm going to miss you guys." Marcy looks at the group and starts to feel guilty about keeping her friends here in the first place.

"No more tears y'all," said Hop pop. "We'll see each other again." "Of course we will," said Darrel. "Cause I want Marcy and Anne to come and find us when we get that box." "Guaranteed," said Anne.

"Spranne against the world!" said Anne and Sprig as they exchanged their signature handshake. They give each other another hug as he hops on the fwagon. Anne and Darrel look at each other knowing they'll be apart for a while. "You know you can come with me," he said. Anne was a bit hesitant. "I understand if you don't want to."

The two hug for what seemed like a very long time, leaving Marcy in tears. The Plantars prepare to leave, and make their way to the main gates. Darrel told them he was going to walk through the scenic route one last time and catch up with the others. "I won't take long, I promise," he said. "Just hold up if I'm not out there."

Darrel takes to the streets of Newtopia one more time, smiling at the citizens, and waving them goodbye. Suddenly, he hears footsteps racing behind him. He chuckled to himself, 'You made the right choice, Marcy.'

"Darrel!" Anne cried. He turns around and the two humans hug with happiness. "Say no more," said Darrel. "Just tell them yourself when we get to the main gate." "Okay," said Anne. "Race ya!" Anne bolts past Darrel making him laugh, "Hey no fair!" Then, he runs after her.

The two humans reached the front gate and the fwagon was waiting outside for him. But what the gang didn't know was that Darrel brought a surprise. "I snatched a little something along the way," he said. Anne gets in front of Bessie, leaving the amphibians surprised.

"I'm coming with you to Wartwood!" she announced. The amphibians cheered with delight. "Good to have you back Anne," said Hop pop. "I assumed this would happen," said Cronaxx. "Come on guys," said Tint. "Let's go home."

Hop pop takes his reins and rides Bessie back home. At the same time, Darrel's head suddenly started hurting. "What's wrong Darrel?" Anne asked. "I don't know," he replied. "Something's wrong. And I think there's one way to find out."

He waves his arms and creates a vision ball. The ball reveals Marcy looking up at King Andrias from behind her. He speaks to her, but this time, in an ominous tone. "Always sad to see someone go, isn't it? I have a proposition for you, Marcy. And I think you'll find it very interesting."

Hearing the King's tone somehow made Cronaxx quiver in fear. But to him, it didn't feel like it was unintentional. Like he knew his tone of voice sounded familiar to him. "Kids, I've got a bad feeling about this," he said. "I know I just met him," said Darrel. "But your old friend seems to know something we don't."

"Maybe," said Anne. "But let's not let it spoil our journey back home." "Anne is right," said Polly. "Let's go Bessie!" Bessie chirps and continues to pull the fwagon.

Wartwood, Sweet Wartwood

Chapter 35 - Wartwood, Sweet Wartwood

Darrel and Anne were so pleased that Marcy allowed them to go back with the Plantars. Marcy agreed to meet up with them once she's all equipped and ready to go, so long as they have the music box with them. Only then, will the group be ready to participate in the first temple.

The gang agreed to pursue their journey back to Wartwood without any stops. Darrel, Anne, and Hop pop took turns driving Bessie. But even with three drivers, they grew tired. Anne nearly fell off the fwagon a few times, and either Hop pop or Darrel had to get her back on.

Inside the fwagon, Cronaxx was fast asleep. But that didn't stop Tint, Sprig, and Polly from planning on what to do when they return to Wartwood. "Alright guys," said Sprig. "Check this out. According to this map, if we drive straight through the night, we'll be home by morning." The three amphibians were mostly excited about this fact.

Sprig was thinking about spending time with Ivy. Tint was thinking about spending time with others besides Darrel and Cronaxx. Polly was simply going to enjoy breakfast when they got home.

Suddenly, the fwagon stopped and the tired drivers climbed inside. "Woah! Where do you guys think you're going?" Polly asked. "We've got a schedule to keep." Darrel groaned, "Ugh! I'm sorry Polly. But, we're just so tired." "We've been driving nonstop for 20 hours," said Anne. "We just need to get some shut eye and we'll be back on the road by morning," said Hop pop.

"But we're so close," said Sprig. "Yeah. Can't you just power through one more night?" Polly asked. Tint looked into Darrel's eyes and said, "Actually, it's not a bad idea. Darrel's got the same eyes I had

when I wanted to learn as much as possible in one day. The day after, I couldn't pay attention to my uncle's lesson."

"Thank you for understanding, Tint," said Darrel. Then, Sprig got an idea, "Oh, what if you guys sleep and we can take us home?" However, Hop pop wasn't having any of it. "Absolutely not. Amphibia changes at night. And not for the better, let me tell you. The nocturnal leech flies are bad enough, but I've even heard folks tell of evil spirits wandering these parts. Real spookums and such! Haven't seen any myself, of course, but you know, it could happen. Plus, neither of you read Bessie's driving manual! You're not driving, and that's final!"

And so, the three crash on their beds. Darrel climbed onto the top bunk and immediately fell asleep. He started dreaming of himself back at Wartwood. He was helping Hop pop weed his crops and planting new ones in the process. Then, he spots Anne riding on Clipper's back. The two wave hello, and Hop pop comes out asking Darrel for more help. "Could you get the package from the shed?" he asked. Darrel nodded yes and went to the shed. But as he opened the door, he started falling into a dark hole.

Down, down, down he went. Without any signs of slowing down or stopping. Suddenly, he heard dark moans and growls coming from the darkness. Then, his body started glowing red, just like one of the gems from the music box. He sees the box in front of him, then a red light fills the dark void.

Behind the box was a wall that had a monstrous frog carved onto it. It had sharp teeth, long limbs, and what looked like a crystal for an eye. The next thing Darrel sees is the eternal staff floating in front of him. He grabs it, and then a brighter light fills his eyes.

Darrel wakes up from his long overdue sleep. However, he wasn't feeling as bright as he usually does every morning. Ever since they left Newtopia, King Andrias' change of tone was lingering inside Darrel's mind the whole journey.

He looked outside to see that the fwagon was moving and heard a ruckus outside. Darrel smiled, knowing that the kids went behind their back when they're so close to home. The fwagon stops, and he pops out to see the kids standing at a statue.

"Hey guys," said Darrel. Tint, Sprig, and Polly turn to see Darrel awake. "Look Darrel, we can explain," said Tint. Darrel puts up his hand telling him to stop. "Normally Hop pop would be disappointed in you guys disobeying us. But I'm not Hop pop, and the fwagon isn't damaged. So I'm going to let it slide as long as you guys get back in here."

The kids were quite relieved, until Hop pop and Anne came out the door as well. "What the heck in a handbasket is goin' on out here? You better not have disobeyed me!" Hop pop cried. He turns to see a sign telling the group that they're much closer to Wartwood. Meaning that they have disobeyed him. "Dang it! Of all the irresponsible, inconsiderate, juvenile..."

The three look to Sprig and Polly who are tired out of their minds, while Tint is standing by them. The two Plantars fall asleep and Tint carries them magically back to the fwagon. "I hope you guys learned your lesson," said Anne. "Oh, we sure have," said Tint. "Then I'll let this one slide," said Hop pop. "But, I'm still going to tell your uncle as soon as he wakes up." "Okay," said Tint.

The four look down the pathway and see Wartwood in their eyesights. "We're almost there," said Darrel. "I got to say Tint. I don't know what you guys did last night, but I bet you guys worked so well together." "Aside from my uncle, those two are the closest things I have to my best friends," said Tint. "And our adventures were, shall I say, fun." "They sure were fun," said Sprig who woke up for this occasion.

Road back to Wartwood (Original Song - Road to Rhode Island)

(*Both*) *We're off on the road back to Wartwood*

We're having the time of our lives.

(Sprig) (Take it Tint...)

(Tint) We're quite a trio of partners,

Just like the Three Musketeers.

'cept we're not six feet tall

(Sprig) Yes, and your tail doesn't reach your knees.

(Tint) (Give it time.)

(Both) We're off on the road back to Wartwood

We're certainly going in style.

(Tint) I'm with a frog who jumps the chance, who crushes on a girl.

(Sprig) How dare you. At least I don't bail on others just to learn spells that swirl.

(Tint) (Oh, really)

(Both) We've traveled a bit and we've found,

Like a soldier in Toad tower, we are Wartwood bound.

((Tint) Crazy travel conditions, huh?

(Sprig) First class or no class

(Tint) Whoa, careful with that joke, it's an antique)

(Both) We're off on the road back to Wartwood

We're not going to stop till we're there

(Tint) Maybe for breakfast.

(Tint) Whatever dangers we may face, we'll never fear or cry

*(Sprig) That's right, until we're syndicated Disney won't let us die.
(Please!)*

(Both) We're off on the road back to Wartwood,

The home of that old campus swing.

(Sprig and Tint take a pause on singing as they dance a small routine)

(Both) We certainly do get around.

Like a bunch of traveling gypsies

We are Wartwood bound.

Or like a loving extended family

Who have no other places to go

We are Wartwood Bound..

Darrel, Anne, and Hop pop were impressed with the musical number. And so was Cronaxx, who woke up to the sound of their singing. "I gotta say," said Darrel. "You two would make an excellent singing duo."

Later that morning, when the sun reached the sky, the group was only a few meters away from the entrance to Wartwood. Hop pop took a whiff of the fresh air. "Ah, how i missed the old swamp air. The aroma of grass, a whisper of manure, and just a pinch of the humidity. You feel that humidity, kids?" "A pinch," replied Anne.

"We're almost back," said Tint. "Wartwood is just up ahead." The gang looks to see the town gates from across the small bridge. Sprig takes his fiddle out and starts singing.

Wartwood, O mighty Wartwood

I sing to thee Our noble history

A newt told a toad...

But don't let them Escape poverty

As Sprig started singing, the crowd got wind of their return. They gather around the fwagon and cheer for their return. "Heya, folks," said Hop pop. He was greeted by a hug from his love interest, Silvia Sundew. "Hoppy! Come here, city boy."

"Any luck finding a way back to your world kids?" Loggle asked. "We have a lead, Loggle," replied Darrel. "We're whittling away at it," said Anne. Loggle blushed in amusement.

Then, Wally came in from the crowd. "Well, if it isn't the Plantars. Haven't seen you lot in a long time. Definitely did not see you on your trip." Tint shrugged, "Yeah, yeah, don't make it obvious Wally." Wally laughed as he returned to the crowd.

Sprig looks around to try and find Ivy, but to no avail. He asked his mother Felicia if she's seen her. However, Ivy pops out of a disguise, "AMBUSH!" She cried. She jumps and tackles her sparring partner to the ground. The two were pleased to see each other again, and the crowd awed at their cuteness.

Then, Mayor Toadstool comes in to disperse the crowd. "Simmer down now, come on. Simmer down." "Good to see you again Mr. Mayor," said Darrel. "Good or not, the market stops for no one," said Mayor Toadstool. "Y'all can welcome back the Plantars after business hours."

"How about we all meet at my restaurant tonight, have a town dinner for the Plantars?" Stumpy asked. "We're in," said Hop pop. "I can't wait for some authentic swamp cooking."

Stumpy takes out a piece of paper, points his meat cleaver hand on the image and says, "And I can't wait for that Newtopian Coral hand fitment. Thanks for picking it up for me."

Hop pop and Polly suddenly realize they forgot something really important. Something that even Cronaxx and Tint weren't even aware of. "Say if we're all going to be together anyway, why not bring all the gifts from our wish list?" Mrs. Croaker asked.

The crowd was pleased, but Sprig, Anne, and Darrel were confused. "Wait a minute, I don't recall any which list," said Darrel. That statement got the crowd's attention, but Hop pop calmed them down. "Great idea Mrs Croaker."

At that very instant, Hop pop and Polly dragged the group back into the fwagon. The five confused members watched Hop pop and Polly knock on their floor boards as if they were looking for a trap door.

"Okay, what's going on with you two?" Cronaxx asked. Hop pop finds the secret compartment, and in it is a list. "So, remember when Hop pop and I went to get to the fwagon?" Polly started.

Polly and Hop pop explained that along the way, they were asked by the people of Wartwood to get them souvenirs on their journey. So they made a list and stored it in the secret compartment. Eventually, they forgot about it throughout the whole trip.

The rest of the gang were disappointed by their forgetfulness. "I'm so sorry you guys," said Polly. "Please don't get mad." "It's okay Polly," said Anne. "You're just a baby. But you!" She points angrily at Hop pop. "How could you forget about something important, Hop pop?"

"Look, I'm sure we can find some way to bury this so no one finds out," said Hop pop. "Truth is like the sun," said Cronaxx. "You can shut it out for a time, but it ain't going away."

"He's right," said Darrel. "Lying will only make things worse." "One thing's for sure, we have to lie," said Sprig. Now Darrel, Anne,

Tint, and Cronaxx were next to be surprised. "Are you out of your mind?!" Darrel asked. "Ivy asked for a red seashell from the Newtopian coast, to match my blue moon shell," explained Sprig.

Anne averted with sweetness, but Darrel was not having it. "Sprig, Ivy would be more disappointed if you betray her trust." "Darrel, Ivy can't find out about this," said Sprig. "Wait a minute, can't you use magic to bring the artifacts here?" Polly asked.

"It's not that simple," said Cronaxx. He creates a vision orb that shows them what could happen if they used magic for a situation like this. "If we were to magically give you guys what you promised the people of Wartwood, especially if they're one of a kind, they will magically vanish from where they were before."

"And that would be stealing," said Darrel. "Which is bad." Sprig, Hop pop, and Polly groan in disappointment. "Aw come on! There's got to be something we can do." "I bet if we put our heads together we can come up with a plan," said Hop pop. "Oh yeah," said Darrel. "And we better hurry or you might forget." "IT WAS ONE TIME, DARREL!" Hop pop cried.

Back at the Plantar House, the fields were covered with tulips. And inside, Hop pop and the rest were trying to find a way to get out of their situation. After a few hours, Hop pop came up with a solution, "Okay, we agree on the concept. Fake empty gift boxes that get tragically destroyed by some kind of monster."

"But what monster?" Anne asked. "But nothing too dangerous, we don't want anyone to actually get hurt." "How about this?" Sprig asked as he showed them a page from the book of monsters. "The Chickalisk: A beast that eats golden treasure, doesn't eat Amphibians, won't attack unless threatened, and can be called to any area with a ritual."

"Where did you get that book?" Cronaxx asked. "Maddie gave it to me," replied Sprig. "Well this Chickalisk is promising," said Tint.

"Gifts get destroyed, no one gets eaten, and Hop pop doesn't get blamed." "Hey!" Hop pop cried.

"Cronaxx, is it okay that we use ancient eldritch magic?" Anne asked. Cronaxx was hesitant, "I don't feel comfortable using dark magic to lie. But, I'll do this since I know what to do." Darrel placed his hand on his shoulder. "It's okay, most of us are uncomfortable. Besides, I have a feeling that they're going to tell the truth by the end of the day."

"Okay," said Cronaxx. "If we're going to perform this ritual, we need a few things." Cronaxx takes the book and points out the items. "First thing we need is the horn of a sky goat. Who's arcane note pierces the air. Next, we need cursed obsidian to amplify the dark energy. And finally, we need candles for the dark vibe of the ritual." "Uh, that's not in the book," said Polly. "You want the ritual or not?" Cronaxx asked. "Yes, sorry," said Polly.

The gang grabs the materials and prepares the dark ritual in the fields. They wore dark robes and surrounded themselves by the dark circle. "Play the forbidden note," commanded Hop pop.

Sprig takes the horn and blows a dark ominous note. Then, Anne drops the cursed obsidian to corrupt the sacred message. A large column of red light shot up to the sky, then diminished within seconds. The summoning was complete.

Shortly after, the group arrive at Stumpy's for the dinner celebration. Darrel and the Salamanders enchant the empty gifts to give it a gold like texture. The group mingles with the citizens, but only Darrel and Cronaxx felt uneasy knowing what's going to happen.

"You know I just realized something," said Darrel. "What's that, Darrel?" Tint asked. "It's-"

Just then, the town feels the ground shaking. A distant screech was heard, and then the giant Chickalisk arrived, scaring the town. The creature spots the golden treasure and proceeds to eat it.

"The Chickalisk is eating the gifts!" Tint cried. "We should probably leave it alone until it's finished," said Hop pop. Just then, Ivy stepped up on the table.

"No way! You guys did something nice for us. Are we going to let some chicken get away with this? Would the Plantars?" "NO!" The crowd responded. Ivy leads the charge, "For The Plantars!"

Darrel, Tint, and Cronaxx sighed in disgust. "Well, if you can't beat em. Join em," said Darrel. "For the Plantars!" The crowd lunges to attack, then the Chickalisk pushes them back with its wings.

Anne helps Darrel get back up. "We've got to be careful," she said. "You're right," said Darrel. "We don't know what this creature can do."

The crowd proceeds to charge again, only for the Chickalisk to shoot laser beams from its eyes and turn a portion of the town into stone. "This doesn't look good," said Tint. "Cool," said Maddie.

Tint turns to Maddie, "Maddie, can they be cured?" "Sure they can," she said as she takes out pouches of magic powder "I should probably have enough for everyone."

"For Wartwood!" Hop pop shouted. Anne and Darrel lead the charge and Maddie cures the petrified frogs. "Everybody split up! We got to surround it!" Anne cried. The crowd agreed and flanked the creature.

After a few more hits from the Chickalisk, the creature started breathing fire from its mouth like a dragon. The fire spreads to the empty gifts, burning them to ash. Mayor Toadstool gathers the townsfolk for one last line of defense. "Everyone! Chickalisk formation!"

The townsfolk gather together and connect with each other to form a Chickalisk. Anne provided the beak on top, and Darrel casted a spell to make them look like another Chickalisk.

The Chickalisk squawks a bit, then takes off, leaving Wartwood. The crowd cheered for their victory. However, that victory was short lived. The creature may be gone, but the damage was left behind.

"That creature burned all the gifts you guys worked so hard to bring back for us," said Mrs Croaker. "If only we had fought harder," said Ivy. "I guess we let you guys down."

The townsfolk groan in shame, then Darrel moans in disgust. He takes his staff and smacks Hop pop upside his head. "Tell them the truth!" He shouted. "Or I will."

Knowing that Darrel is on the fence with this big lie, Polly gave in. "Me and Hop pop forgot the wish list and didn't get you guys anything!"

The town gasped, then groaned at their deceit. "Why am I not surprised?" said Mayor Toadstool. "Typical Plantars, giant monsters, property damage, putting the entire town in danger..." The gang looked down in shame, until the mayor spoke again.

"I gotta admit, I missed it." The crowd also agreed. Sure the Plantars caused the whole ruckus, but the townsfolk all agreed that life was boring without them around, causing mayhem. Ivy still looked grumpy, which made Sprig worry.

"Ivy, I'm sorry I didn't get you a red sunshell," he said. Ivy punches him in the arm and smirks, "You big dummy, it's just a shell. You can make it up to me by finally taking me on a date."

Ivy kisses him on the cheek, making Sprig feel light as a feather. Darrel smiled at Ivy's gesture to Sprig. And Anne was geeking out over the two finally dating. Darrel sees Anne geeking out and takes her by the arm. "Okay, let them have their time together," he said.

After the big celebration bust, the Plantars and the Salamanders finally settled in at home. As for Darrel, he kept watching the sky. Seeing clouds move, covering the star light. Suddenly, he

remembered something. He looked out to the fields close to the house. "If you won't tell her Hop pop, I will."

Excess Exercising

Chapter 36 - Excess Exercising

Another day arrives at Wartwood. And with it, a whole new Darrel. With the gang back at Wartwood, Darrel started glaring at Hop pop. Hop pop felt threatened by Darrel's glare, but was completely unaware why he was glaring at him.

Darrel remembered that Hop pop made an agreement with him and the salamanders that when they returned to Wartwood, he would tell them what happened to the music box. However, since they got back, Hop pop continues to keep the box a secret.

The more Hop pop kept quiet, the more Darrel fumed with rage. Darrel's anger has also been a distraction to his magic training. Every step he took, quaked the ground. Every swing of his staff spewed boiling water. And every chant he spoke, sparked fire across the crops.

"Darrel, are you okay?" Tint asked. "No, clearly I'm not okay," replied Darrel. "I think I know what the problem is," said Cronaxx. "It's Hop pop, isn't it?" Darrel nodded, "It's been two days since we came back. And he's nowhere close to telling the others about the box!"

A small thundercloud hovers over his head. "It's driving me crazy that I'm keeping this from Anne. She's my girlfriend for crying out loud, and if I don't tell her, she's going to be upset." Cronaxx pats his leg, trying to calm him down. "Maybe you should get out of the farm for a bit, maybe focus on something else."

Darrel nods in agreement, "As long as I get away from the house." Darrel walks into town, hands in pockets and looking a bit stern. He looks over to Felicia's teahouse, and decides to head over there.

Darrel heads inside but finds the place empty, then again Felicia's teahouse isn't busy this time of day. "Oh good morning Darrel," said Felicia. "How are you doing?" "Not so good Felicia," replied Darrel. "I'm really stressed out."

"I may have just the tea to calm your nerves," said Felicia. "Please have a seat." Darrel takes a seat and waits for Felicia to arrive. The smell of tea leaves, and the textures of her cups and kettles, made Darrel a tad bit calm.

Felicia arrives with Darrel's tea which pleased him so well. "Where did you get all that china?" he asked. "I was quite an adventurer myself back in the day," replied Felicia. "I've had quite an adventure to Newtopia," said Darrel. "But I kinda liked the countryside better than the big city."

"So what's been troubling you lately?" Felicia asked. "Have you ever known what it's like to have someone you trust keep a secret from you? Especially if it's important to know?" Darrel asked. "Not exactly," said Felicia. "But Ivy's been lacking on her chores and her attention to detail, lately. That kind of behavior is difficult for me. But, if there's anything I've learned about being a mother, it's that you have to have patience. No matter how long it takes."

Darrel finishes his tea and pays Felicia. "Thank you for the advice Felicia," said Darrel. "I'll keep that in mind. And even though Ivy is rebellious and outgoing, she should be lucky to have a mom like you." "Why thank you, Darrel," said Felicia. "Have a good day."

The very next day, Darrel woke up from his slumber and decided to tend to Bessie for the day. He recalls what Felicia told him at the tea house and took her advice to heart. However, he was still pumped up on energy. So he needed to find something to burn it off.

Suddenly, he hears Anne and Polly chanting as they left the house. Anne was in her fitness gear and she and Polly were both wearing martial arts headbands "Muay Thai! Muay Thai! "Muay Thai!" Darrel

smiled at Anne introducing Polly another traditional Thailand event. "Hey Darrel," said Anne. "We're Muay Thaiing!" Polly shouted.

"Yeah, I see that," said Darrel. "Anne's going to teach me some sweet moves," said Polly. "You wanna join?" Darrel nodded, "Sure, let me get ready." Immediately, Darrel rushes into the basement to put on his fitness gear, sportstape, and his karate headband. "I guess I've found my way to burn off my energy," he said.

He joins the girls outside and makes their way out to the lilypads where Sprig and Hop pop fought in the family challenge. Along the way, they come across Sprig, Tint, and Ivy, who were glitterbug hunting.

"Hey guys," said Darrel. "We're about to get into the spirit of Muay Thai." "What now?" Tint asked. "Muay Thai," said Anne. "It's a form of traditional Thai martial arts. My mom enrolled me in a class when she realized how high spirited I was."

Darrel shrugged, "When she was really young, she was very energetic. There were times when she annoyed her mom with her banging on pots and pans." Anne punches Darrel in the arm, "Stop it!" "You know you loved doing that," said Darrel in a cheeky tone. "Anyway, Anne's going to teach me and Polly some moves. Wanna join?"

"Oh man, that sounds awesome," said Ivy. "But Sprig and I can't. We're about to go glitterbug hunting." "I'd love to," said Tint. "But, I'm gonna join my Uncle soon for more of my personal training." "Suit yourselves," said Darrel. The three chant in the forest, "Muay Thai! Muay Thai! Muay Thai!"

The three reach the battle arena, standing on a lily pad. "Okay, listen well pollywogs," said Anne. "Uh, Anne, Darrel's not a pollywog," said Polly. Darrel shushes her, "I'm a pollywog when it comes to Muay Thai."

"Darrel's right Polly," said Anne. "This is both your first day. Now, Muay Thai is all about-" "Enough talk!" Polly jumped, whipping her small tail for an attack. In response, Anne blocked her attack and Polly fell down.

"Nice block Anne," said Darrel. "My instructor always used to tell me, 'jai yen yen.'" said Anne. "It means to have patience and a cool heart." Polly attacks again, only for Anne to dodge her.

"Alright, now it's my turn." Darrel swings his leg high, and Anne counterattacks his strike. Darrel stays on his feet as Anne jumps ahead to strike back. Darrel blocks her moves, and grabs one of her arms. Anne pulls back, and Darrel lets go of her. Polly stares in jealousy and amazement.

"You're getting pretty good at Muay Thai, Darrel," said Anne. "Muay Thai? I thought this was a dance class," he mocked. This made Anne blush in embarrassment. "Oh you wanna see real Muay Thai? Bring it!"

The two humans go at each other with more punches, kicks, sweeps, and lunges. They were focused and patient, until Darrel lost his balance for a second. Anne took that as an advantage and sideswiped him and pinned him down.

"And Anne wins the match!" Polly cried. Darrel and Anne smirked at each other. "Well done, young pollywog," said Anne. "You lasted longer than I anticipated." "Well that's because I have a great teacher who taught me patience is key," said Darrel. Anne kisses him on the nose, and the two get up from the ground.

Suddenly, Darrel hears a distant voice coming closer. "Ivy Hibiscus Matcha Sundew!" "What was that?" Polly asked. "Sounds like Felicia," said Darrel. "And it sounds like Ivy is having another fit about her tea shop."

"Yeah yeah," said Polly. "I want to have a go now. Darrel, take five." Darrel nods and sits on the log. Polly takes another crack at Muay

Thai, only for Anne to dodge her attacks again. "Not bad, Polly. But you still lack patience."

Suddenly, Ivy, Tint and Sprig come rushing in, knocking Anne down. Felicia came up not too far behind them. "Ivy Sundew, I've had it with your disobedience!" "Well, I've had it with your nitpicking, your rules, and your tea lessons!" Ivy shouted.

Darrel could not believe that what Felicia said was true. Her relationship with her mother was stubborn. Felicia sighed, "I can't believe I have raised such an ungrateful and disrespectful daughter!" Feeling insulted, Ivy fired back. "Oh, yeah? Well, then, maybe I don't even wanna be your daughter!"

That statement made everyone gasp, and it ticked Darrel to the core. He takes his hand and telepathically lifts Ivy with a firm grip. Ivy felt like she was being squeezed by his magic. "You take that back Ivy!" Darrel shouted. "Your mother loves you, no matter what!"

"Darrel, please," said Felicia. "I'll handle this. This is between us." Darrel closed his eyes and took a deep breath. "You're right, I'm sorry." Darrel lets Ivy go and she regains her strength. "I'm sorry," said Ivy. "It's just that, I wanna see the world, you know. Get my hands dirty, learn martial arts, things like that."

Then, Felicia had an idea, "Martial arts, eh? Fine, you don't have to take tea lessons anymore. If you can beat me in a martial arts fight. Three rounds. And you only need to win one."

Ivy could not believe what she was hearing, her mother was challenging her to a fight. Thinking she was going to win against a teahouse shopkeeper, Ivy accepted the challenge. "This is going to be easy," she said.

Soon after, the two frogs geared up for their big fight. Polly, Anne, Tint, Darrel, and Sprig sat on the sideline. Anne rings the bell and Darrel says, "Hajimeru,"

Ivy rushes over to swing a punch on her mother, only for her to jump out of her way and leap to the other side. The kids were surprised by the move, not knowing she would learn something like that in the teahouse.

"Must've been a lucky dodge," said Ivy. "Here I come!" Ivy charges at her mother again, only for Felicia to dodge her attacks and then makes her move by tapping Ivy on her cheek. "And Felicia gets the boop," said Polly. "Round one to Felicia!"

"Woah, where did you learn those moves?" Anne asked. "Oh, I picked them up from my travels," replied Felicia. Darrel perked up, recalling what she told him the other day. "What travels?" Ivy asked. Darrel simply started the next round, "Hajimeru,"

Ivy charges at Felicia again, and Felicia dodges like before. She quickly grabs Ivy and taps her again. Ivy could not believe that she was losing, and the match was just getting started.

"Two for Felicia!" Polly announced. "It's the third and final round," said Sprig. "Whoever wins this, wins it all," said Tint. The two fighters get in position and Darrel smiles. "Hajimeru."

Ivy goes after her mother again, only for the same thing to happen again. Ivy attacks, Felicia dodges, and Felicia pins Ivy to score the point. Ivy struggles to get back up, to no avail. "She shouldn't have rushed it," said Polly. "Now you're getting it," said Anne.

Ivy knew she wasn't going to win, "Finish it." However, Felicia said, "Fold the swan napkins." Ivy was confused, until she moved her arms like she was folding the swan napkins at the teashop. She, even Darrel, was surprised. 'This is almost like that martial arts movie I saw with Dad,' he thought.

Eventually, Ivy listened to her mother by performing the moves she would make with her tea chores. Then, she tapped her mother, winning the round. Ivy was impressed, "Mom, where did you learn those moves?" "I was a little bit of an adventurer myself back in the

day," replied Felicia. "Where do you think my exotic selection of teas comes from? Or my frog china?"

Ivy was stunned, "I-I had no idea." "Ivy, you think I don't see you, but I do. You want to travel the world, and I get it. But you have to be patient, because it's dangerous out there, and I just want you to be ready before we go. After all, all of these tea exercises were to prepare you for when I take you on my next tea-gathering adventure."

Ivy gasped and hugged her, "You're the best mom ever! I still can't believe you used to be some kind of world traveler." Felicia chuckled, "Oh, honey. Where do you think I met your father?" "Mom, please!"

Darrel smiled at Ivy's gestures to Felicia, thinking back to his mother. Sure there were times that it seemed like she was making it difficult for him. But those times were just to help him prepare for what comes next. Plus, she wanted to make fond memories with him.

Then, Polly comes in for an attack. Anne dodges her, but hits Darrel square in the face. "You caught me off guard, Polly," said Darrel, rubbing his jaw. "Impressive." "Technically, I was going for Anne," said Polly. "So that was her fault." The group laughs it off as they return to the farm.

After the Rain

Chapter 37 - After the Rain

Darrel wakes up to a brand new day in Amphibia. Usually, he would feel cheery and excited about his grand adventure with his friends. But this day was different. Darrel felt a chill down his spine, knowing that the truth about the box is going to come out, one way or another.

Darrel figured that Hop pop wasn't going to tell them the truth. That's why he decided that he was going to tell Anne tonight. He knew that at this point of time, it was too late to understand that he knew for so long and kept it quiet. 'I don't want to lose her,' he thought. 'But how else is Anne going to know the dangers of the box?'

Cronaxx and Tint spot Darrel looking out the horizon from the farm and walk up to him. "Still thinking about it, huh?" Tint asked. Darrel nodded, "He's not going to tell them. So I will." Cronaxx closed his eyes and said, "If your heart truly believes you should tell them, then you may."

"It's not going to be easy," said Darrel. "I've known about this for a long time, and if I tell Anne now, she'll be upset." "It's like you said," said Tint. "It's better to know now and be disappointed than to never know and always wonder." Darrel smiled, "Someone is listening to his words of wisdom."

Out by the stables, Darrel finds Anne tending to Bessie. He takes slow steps to tell Anne what he found out about the box. He looks back to the photos of him and his friends. For he knows that once this gets out, he may never see her smile for a long time.

(One Jump Ahead - Reprise 2)

"Fibster," "House rat"

Would she think that

If she looked much closer?

Still, I can't cover this here

No, sirree

(Looks to his hands)

Gotta tell the truth, I can't pretend

Even if it means this dream will end

Even if she walks away from me

Anne looks over to see Darrel approach her. "Hey Darrel, how's it going?" Darrel waved back, "Hey Anne, you got a minute? I have something very important to tell you." Anne was peculiar with his tone of voice. She honestly thought that he would be hyped with their big adventure on the way. But something in his mind made her concerned. "Sure bud, what is it?" Darrel takes a deep breath, "It's not easy to say, but it's about-"

Then, out of nowhere, a fly carrying a letter arrives at the farm. "Oh, hold that thought Darrel. The Plantars have got to see this." Darrel sighed as she ran into the house, "One way or another, she's gonna find out."

Inside, the Plantars were enjoying a hearty breakfast. They were greeted by a hyped up Anne. "Yo guys! Check it out. I got a mail fly message." The fly flies in with the letter, followed by Darrel and the Salamanders. "Look how cute he is."

"Jealous, I never get mail," said Polly. "Open it, open it," said Sprig. Anne opens the letter and everyone gathers around her. Darrel smiles, "That's Marcy's handwriting alright." "She says we're ready to travel to the first temple," said Anne. The group cheers in excitement.

"Ooh, she even included a checklist for things to bring," said Darrel. He leans in to read the supplies. "We'll need food, weapons, potions..." Sprig, Polly, and Tint chek them off with fly stew, a flail, and health potions in hand.

"Okay, next we'll need armor," said Darrel. "Armor?" Anne asked. "Got it covered," said Hop pop. "Believe it or not, I made each of you your very own suit of armor." The kids were excited at first.

Until they were stuffed in giant fluffy sacks of armor. Darrel felt uncomfortable as he and Anne fell down, and were unable to get up again. "Humans down!" Anne cried out.

"Hop pop! This is the exact opposite of a suit of armor," said Polly. "Exactly," said Hop pop. "Less mobility means less trouble." "And makes us easier targets," said Tint. "True that," said Polly. "Hey Anne, anything else on that list?"

Anne takes out the list and says the one thing that made Darrel and the Salamanders frown upon. "Oh yeah, just one more thing: The music box." That item made Hop pop give off a feared look. "Uh yeah. No problem, my contacts will have it ready by tomorrow." "Great, you're the best," said Anne, giving Hop pop a thumbs up. Hop pop smiled shamefully, while Darrel and the salamanders looked at him with disgust.

Later that night, Anne was all packed, and trying to get some sleep. But she was too excited to sleep. Especially when they have a way back home in their grasp. Darrel was looking out the window with a heavy heart. He knew it was now or never. He had to tell her.

"Can't sleep Anne?" Darrel asked. "Nope," she replied. She looked at Darrel who had a serious look on his face. She could tell something was wrong. "Are you okay Darrel?" Darrel shook his head, "We need to talk, Anne. It's about the box."

"What about it?" Anne asked. "Cronaxx told me that the box is a dangerous tool." Anne was shocked when he told her. "How can a

box be that dangerous?" she asked in disbelief. "You're asking someone who talked to a wizard that knows more than the average amphibian," said Darrel. "He told me that before we left for Newtopia."

Anne was surprised, "Why didn't you tell me before?" "Because I promised someone I would keep it quiet until we got back from Newtopia," said Darrel. "Apparently, he wouldn't keep his end of the deal." "Who?" Anne asked. Suddenly, they heard a thump from upstairs.

The two humans quietly look out the trap door and find someone leaving through the front door. They climb out and exit the house, only to see Hop pop digging right by the tree. Darrel scowled with disgust, but Anne was curious as to what he's doing.

The two quietly sneak up behind Hop pop, only to listen to what happened next. Hop pop climbs out of his hole and said, "It can't be! The music box! It's gone!" This shocked not only Hop pop, but Anne and Darrel too.

"What?" Anne asked, breaking the silence. Hop pop turns to see the two humans behind him. "Ahh! Anne, Darrel, what are you doing here!?" "Did you say the music box is gone?" Anne asked.

Darrel clenched his fists, "Tell her, now! If you lie to her one more time, we're gone. You will never see us again. But if you tell us the truth, we'll try to understand. No matter what your reasons are."

Hop pop knew he was caught. There was no more denying what he knew. "I CAN'T LIE ANYMORE!" "I buried the box here. And now it's missing!"

"Wait, what?!" Anne gasped. "But your contacts-" "There were no contacts Anne," said Darrel. "Hop pop was just covering it up, weren't you?" "Yes it's true," said Hop pop. "I read the box was dangerous. I didn't know what to do. I panicked!"

"You guys gotta understand, I was just trying to protect Sprig and Polly!" Anne could not believe what she was hearing. "So you've been lying to me? Both of you?!" Darrel was shocked, but kept calm. "I would've told you the moment I found out the box was dangerous. I wanted to respect Hop pop's wishes. But I guess he was just trying to hide the fact that nothing bad is happening."

He turns to Hop pop, "Well look closer Hopediah Plantar! A bad thing has happened! We're stuck here and we need to get home!"

Hop pop stuttered, "My reasons are complicated! Can't you understand?" "Complicated or not, we need the music box to get home!" Anne shouted. "And you buried it under a tree! What are you trying to do? Keep us here forever!?"

"No No!" Hop pop cried. "It's not like that! It's just, I've lost so much already. And-" "Stop!" Darrel cried. "You think you've lost so much? My mom is terminally sick, and if I don't get back, I'm blaming you for keeping me here!"

Darrel and Anne take their leave from the Plantar farm. "Kids," said Hop pop. "Don't follow us!" Anne cried. Darrel used his staff to petrify Hop pop's legs. "What the?" "Don't worry, it'll wear off," he said. "But we'll be gone by the time it does." Hop pop couldn't do anything but watch them walk back into the wilderness.

Darrel and Anne walked very quietly for a while. Darrel knows how upset Anne is, so he didn't think it was a proper time to speak. However, Anne broke the silence. "You know you didn't have to follow me." "Anne, we're in this situation together," said Darrel. "Wherever you go, I go."

"Aren't you scared I might be upset with you?" Anne asked. Darrel nodded, "I am. However, when Hop pop found out, he was thinking about himself. But when I found out from Cronaxx, I was thinking about us. You, me, Sasha, and Marcy."

Losing her anger from his statement, Anne hugged Darrel. "You are so selfless," she said. "Yeah," said Darrel. "There's not a lot of people like me, though. That's the sad part." "Then those people are missing out on all the good you see," said Anne. "People like you, make the world a better place."

Darrel smiled as the two reached a cave to rest up. Darrel was a tad curious about this cave, until he spotted handwriting on the wall. 'Anne Wuz Here.' On the other side of the wall were five lines scratched off. He realized that the box transported Anne around here when they separated.

"You've been here on your first days in Amphibia?" Darrel asked. "Yep," replied Anne. "Never thought I'd be sleeping in this cave again. At least I'll have you and Rocky."

"Rocky?" Darrel asked. He turns around to find a rock decorated with moss hair, and paint for a face. "Hmm, wait here." Darrel exits the cave with another rock and gives it a little face as well. He places the rock next to hers and says, "Rocky, meet Wilson." The two humans laughed.

A storm arrived later in the day, and the two humans were still having fun with their rock mates. Anne and Darrel set up their cave like a wedding altar for their rocks. 'If only I had my bobby pins for Rocky's hair,' she thought. "If anyone knows why these rocks should not wed, speak now or forever hold your peace," said Darrel.

Suddenly, lightning strikes outside revealing a silhouette in the cave's entrance. At first the two humans were horrified, but then disgusted when it was revealed to be Hop pop. "Oh, it's you," said Darrel.

"Please kids, just let me explain," said Hop pop. "I am not talking to you right now, Hop pop," said Anne. "I need you guys to know why I hid the music box," said Hop pop. "Then, why is it so complicated to tell us?" Darrel asked. "I was just trying to protect the family," replied Hop pop. "But why would you lie to us?" Anne asked.

Before Hop pop could explain, they hear Sprig, Polly, and Tint screaming in the distance. They make their way to a burrow of bugs. "What the heck is that?" Anne asked. "It's a love-nado," said Cronaxx. The three look to the side and see him on the edge of the burrow.

"The Magpie beetle is a rare breed of insect that lives underground. Every 20 years it burrows to the surface and steals junk to make its shell. It presents that shell to prospective mates in a ritual called the 'love-nado dance.'"

Darrel spots Tint who has grabbed the box off one of the Magpie Beetles. "Guys!" he called out. "Hold on to each other!" Sprig, Polly, and Tint grab onto each other. Tint keeps the box in his hand, making sure he doesn't let go.

Darrel takes his staff and proceeds to lift the three amphibians off the ground and out of the burrow. As they are floating from a safe distance, Tint accidentally drops the box into Anne's arms. "You found it guys!" he cheered.

"Better thank Soggy Joe," said Tint. "He was the one who identified the culprit." Darrel smiled, "I should."

"That was amazing," said Polly. "I can't believe we did it!" Sprig cried. "Yeah, we did," said Anne in an unimpressed tone. Despite getting the box back, she was still upset that Hop pop buried it in the first place. "And now, we're through here."

She turns away from the Plantars and marches off. Darrel follows her from behind. "Anne, Darrel, no," said Sprig. "Where will you go?" Polly asked. "It's clear that Hop pop doesn't want to tell us why he buried the box," said Darrel. "If it's too painful, fine. Don't say anything."

"Kids, wait," said Hop pop. He tried one more time to convince them. "What I did wasn't right. But I didn't do it to trick you?" Anne and Darrel just kept walking away. "Then, why is it so hard to tell the

truth?" Darrel asked, not bothering to turn around. Hop pop sighed, and said only four words. "Sprig and Polly's parents."

Those words made Anne and Darrel stop in their own tracks. It even made Sprig and Polly perk up hearing those words. "Hop pop," "That wasn't your fault." Tint and Cronaxx stopped them so Hop pop could explain.

"It was a few years ago," he began. "I was on a journey when the herons attacked Wartwood. Sprig and Polly survived. But their parents weren't so lucky." With tears in his eyes, Hop pop clenched his fists. "If I had just been there, I know things would've been different. Ever since then, I swore I'd never let my family down again. That I would do anything to protect them."

Darrel and Anne turned around as Hop pop continued. "So when I found out the box was dangerous, I lied to you and hid it away. I thought I was protecting my family. But now I realized how foolish it was. You're my family too. And I let you down. I let us all down. I'm sorry. I'm sorry! I'M JUST SO SORRY!"

Hop pop was on his knees, crying his heart out. Realizing the weight he had on protecting his family, Darrel and Anne cried too. Mostly Darrel, considering his situation with his mother. The two come back and hug Hop pop with all their hearts. "It's okay, Hop pop," said Darrel. "We forgive you," said Anne.

Later the group jumps in for a group hug and later gets out of the rain. Along the way, Cronaxx talks with Hop pop. "I hope you are aware that things can't go back to where they were before." "He's right, Hop pop," said Darrel. "If it's okay with you, me and Anne are going to need time to ourselves. But don't worry, we're not mad at you. It's just one of those things after a situation like this." Hop pop nodded, "Of course, you take as much time as you two need. In fact, before you guys do, I must show you guys something."

Back at the Plantar's house the group arrive at Hop pop's study to see what he had to show them. "This book has been in our family for

as long as I can remember," he said. "And look." He opens the book to show the page where he found the box.

The group, mostly the kids, were stunned to see the page on record. "Calamity box?" Anne asked. "Sheesh, that does sound bad." "Especially with bad dreams I have about that thing," said Darrel. "I guess all we can do now is wait for Marcy," said Sprig. "Agreed," said Tint. "As far as I'm concerned, this quest to the temple is more dangerous than we thought."

"Well, kids," said Hop pop. "Think this gang can handle it?" "I don't think," said Cronaxx. "I know we can. All it takes is the will of our group." "You got that right, Cronaxx," said Darrel. The group hugs in preparation for what comes next. "You kids sure you don't want to wear the Puffy suits?" Hop pop asked. "Hop pop," said Sprig and Polly sternly. "Okay okay, just had to ask."

Darrel looks out the window with a serious look on his face. "Whatever it takes, I will get us home," he said. "Even if I had to do it alone." "Don't say that, Darrel," said Anne. "You're not alone, and you never will be." The two hold hands and smile at each other. "Thank you for being there for me Anne," he said. "You're welcome, Darrel," said Anne.

The First Temple

Chapter 38 - The First Temple

After the incident with the Calamity Box, and Hop pop finally coming clean, the group prepares for Marcy's arrival. Cronaxx was in Hop pop's study brewing more healing potions, in case the group ever needed any. And the kids were in the kitchen waiting for breakfast.

Hop pop decided to treat them all with a special breakfast. At the same time, Darrel tells Anne that certain bugs taste like chocolate from back home. "Why wouldn't you tell me sooner?" Anne asked. "It just never occurred to me," replied Darrel. "I swear if you were holding out on me like that, I would steal your share," said Anne.

Darrel nodded out of fear of making Anne hungry and angry. "Hop pop, you never let us have chocopedede pancakes," said Polly. "What's going on?" "I thought you guys deserve a treat," replied Hop pop. "After, well..."

"Hop pop, it's okay," said Darrel. "You sure?" Hop pop asked. "I told you it's going to take some time to adjust," replied Darrel. "Besides, we got the box back, and everyone is safe." "Darrel's right," said Anne. "We appreciate the breakfast Hop pop. Just don't try too hard."

Hop pop nodded, "Sure kids, this old frog still got some time left on his legs." "Boy am I glad, you guys forgave him," said Sprig. "Some people would carry the scars of betrayal for life. Not you two though."

"No, no," said Darrel. "The scars are still there, Sprig. Especially after finding out more about the Calamity Box. I haven't had a decent night's sleep ever since we left Toad Tower. But as long as Hop pop knows that we don't hate him anymore, and that he's sorry, then everything's okay."

Hop pop smiles gleefully, until they hear a bird chirping from outside. But this bird sounded much bigger. "I'll get it," he said. The kids quickly ate their pancakes and followed Hop pop outside.

The group exits the house to find a large bird flying to the farm. The bird is shown to have plated armor and a helmet with a feather on top. The bird also has a scar crossing its left eye. The bird is also shown to have a big pile of books on its back. It lands and chirps, scaring Hop pop. "Ahh! A monster bird ridden by a pile of books!" "Hop pop," said Cronaxx. "Birds aren't ridden by books."

The rider who popped out of the books reveals to be Marcy. "Hiya Plantar Family, and Salamanders," she greeted. "MARCY!" cheered the kids. Marcy dismounts off her bird, only to fall off, along with a couple of books.

"Big news everyone," Marcy began. "I've finished my preparations for the-" She takes a moment to gaze upon the Plantar family house. She squeals in excitement, "Whaa... Is this your house? Oh, it's so rustic and cute. When was it built? Third century? No. No, no, no. Second. Yes, of course. Okay, when it was af-"

Before Marcy could go any further, Darrel and Anne stop her. "Hey hey, Marbles. Big news?" "Try not to stray away from what's important." "Oh right," said Marcy. "I've finished my prep and we're ready for the first temple!"

"Alright!" said Darrel "Awesome!" said Anne. She and Marcy exchanged a high five. "I just need to see the music box. Then it's go-time, gang. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah! Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah! Yeah-ya!"

"Marcy!" cried Darrel. "Calm down. I'm just as excited as you are, but we need to compose ourselves." "Sorry, sorry. Long flight," said Marcy. "A lot of pent-up energy. Anyway, music box."

Anne digs into her backpack for the Calamity Box. "Good thing she didn't show up a few days ago. Am I right?" Sprig asked. "You need

to stop," replied Polly.

"Here you go," said Anne. She takes out the box and gives it to Marcy. She cracks her knuckles and begins to work. "Okay if my studies are correct, then..."

She proceeds to push hidden buttons on the box. Darrel watches with a surprised look on his face. 'How did she know there were buttons on the box?' he thought. The box plays a small jingle and then the stones come out, giving Marcy the ability to grab them.

The group was amazed. "How did you know the box would do that?" Darrel asked. "I studied, weren't you listening?" Marcy replied. "Okay," said Darrel, though he kept his suspicions up.

"Here you go, bud," said Marcy as she offers the box to Cronaxx. Cronaxx in return gives the box back to Anne. "Well, we've got a big journey ahead. I'll explain everything on the way." She turns around to call her bird, "Come on Joe, Joe?" She spots her bird doing a dance in front of Bessie.

"Joe Sparrow!" Marcy gasped. Bessie blushed at Joe's dance, until Marcy interrupted him. "Leave that snail alone!" She gathered her books and climbed up her companion. Anne, Sprig, and Polly followed her trying to sit down. "Kinda cramped up here, huh?" Anne asked.

"Doesn't look like there's any more room for us," said Darrel. "No matter." He whistles to the house and out comes his magic carpet, ready for the journey. "The rest of you will ride with me."

And so, the group takes to the skies, making their way to the first temple. "So what's the plan for getting to the first temple Marcy?" Tint asked. Marcy takes out a scroll and says, "Well, according to my research, these three ancient temples are filled with difficult challenges to keep out the unworthy. All we have to do is complete the challenges, and then we can charge the stone."

"Nifty," said Anne. "So, what kind of challenges we talkin'?" "This first temple is said to specifically challenge your intelligence," said Marcy. "So I'm pretty sure it's full of puzzles. No frog, toad or newt in history has been able to survive it."

"An intelligence temple?" Darrel asked. "Sounds like something up your ally, Marcy. Just be careful." "Darrel's right," said Anne. "When you get this into something, you tend to tune everything else out."

"Is that true?" Hop pop asked. "Yeah, it's true," replied Darrel. "There were times when she was playing her games, she forgets everything. From dispensing her own ice cream, to pulling ropes in school plays, even walking in zoo exhibits without even looking up." "That was the worst Saturday of my life," said Anne.

"That's called being in the zone, guys," said Marcy. "It's pretty much my superpower." Anne sighed, "Okay okay, just don't forget about us. This place is going to be dangerous and we're here to help."

"Oh please, like I could ever forget you guys," said Marcy. "Penny? Sprout? Flint?" The amphibians corrected their names, "Polly." "Sprig." "Tint." "Look, the point is, I'm not going to let you guys down," said Marcy.

After a few more meters in the sky, Joe and Carpet dive down to their first destination. When Carpet stopped suddenly, Hop pop flew off and landed on one of the brain looking mushrooms.

"Note to self: Install seatbelts on Carpet," said Darrel, jotting down on a notepad. "Okay, Marcy, where are we now?"

"Welcome to Amygdala Woods, everyone," replied Marcy. "Home to the first temple." The group, except for Cronaxx, awed in delight. "I've been to these woods before," he said. "I gathered ingredients for intelligence potions around here."

"Woah, what are these things?" Sprig asked as he and Tint pulled Hop pop off of the mushroom. "They're called Gyromitra Esculenta,"

replied Cronaxx. "Also known as brain mushrooms." Marcy finished.

"Kinda ironic that the first temple is hidden by a forest of brains, right?" Tint asked. "Speaking of temples, I think you way overhyped this place," said Polly in an unexciting way. She points to where an outhouse is located. But Marcy turned them around.

"No, no, no. That's the temple." The group was immediately back to being impressed. Standing before them was a large temple that looked like the ones from ancient civilizations. Waterfalls were spouting out and in front of the group was a staircase leading to the front door.

Sprig checked out that the outhouse that Polly spotted was just an outhouse. The group climbed the steps to the door. Then, Marcy said, "Alright guys, let's do this thing!" Her statement echoed over the forest.

Darrel and Anne open the doors to the temple, and the group walk in carefully. Polly steps on a strange tile, afraid that she set off a trap. However, mushrooms began to glow in the room, showing the first locked door.

"Did I learn an entire dead language just for today?" Marcy asked the group. "You better believe I did!" "Well did your studies ever teach you how to translate ruins into the English language?" Darrel asked.

"Watch this." Darrel takes his staff and twirls it around. He closes his eyes and the crystal turns into a solid green grass texture. "*Etalsnart*," he called. Then, the ruins on the wall began to glow, then changed their words into the English language.

"Okay, *that* was impressive," said Marcy. "What'd I tell you," said Anne. "He is full of surprises." "Go ahead, Marcy," said Darrel. "Read it." Marcy takes out her journal and writes down the inscription.

"It says: Keeper of the box, one strong of mind, three trials await, that will return the stones' shine." Listening to the inscription

carefully, Tint came up with an answer, "I think this is where we have to overcome three trials in this temple."

"Sounds about right, Tint," said Marcy. Suddenly, the doors open the way to the first trial. Only for it to be a dead end.

"Well, we tried our best and that's what counts," said Sprig about to leave. "Hold on Sprig," said Cronaxx/. "A true wizard always sees what others do not." "But there's nothing here," said Polly. "That's the point," said Darrel. "Let's look around, and see if we can find anything."

The group looks around, hoping to find the key to proceeding through the temple. Anne looks down to find a puzzle cube. "Hey, guess who found the puzzle?" Suddenly, a magic bubble surrounds Anne and lifts her up off the ground.

The group was at first shocked, especially Hop pop. "Frog, help us! A cursed cube possessed by evil magic!" "No, no," said Cronaxx. "It's not evil magic. If it was, I would have sensed it."

"He's right," said Marcy. "It's the puzzle!" "Touching it must have triggered the start of the test," said Tint. "Well whatever it is, all yours Marbles," said Anne as she threw the cube to her.

Marcy catches the cube and Anne falls to the ground. Luckily Darrel was there to catch her. "Thanks Darrel." Anne said blushing. "No problem," said Darrel as he put Anne down.

Marcy floats up in the magic bubble with the puzzle in hand, "Whoa, this thing's got, like, a zillion permutations. If this temple thinks it can beat me, it's got another thing coming." Marcy moves the first piece of the puzzle, starting the first trial.

But as she moved the first piece, the room moved in sync with the cube. The group moves with the room, then slides off the wall. "Everyone gather round," said Cronaxx. The group does, and

Cronaxx uses his magic to lift them the same way the trial is with Marcy.

"Hey Marcy, next time give us a heads up when you move before you move the puzzle," said Darrel. Marcy however, wasn't listening. She continued to finish the puzzle and the door opened. "Hah! Got it!"

Cronaxx brought the group down, then fell down as well. "Uncle! Are you okay?" Tint asked. "Yeah, just a little winded," replied Cronaxx. "Let me regain my strength." "Hold tight, Cronaxx," said Darrel as he stuffed his teacher in his backpack. "Thanks, Darrel," he said. "Just try not to lean forward, or the zipper will open up," said Darrel.

"One down, two to go," said Marcy as she ran ahead of the group. "You weren't kidding about her being in the zone, guys," said Polly. "Not to mention she's a tad overconfident," said Hop pop. "Hard to argue with the results though," said Sprig as the group pressed on to the next trial.

The group reached the top of the stairs, with Cronaxx regaining his strength to walk again. At what appears to be the second trial, the room showed different colored tiles on the floor. "Oh, hey, a dance floor," said Anne.

Darrel thought otherwise, "It's not a dance floor, Anne." "He's right," said Marcy. "Watch." Marcy takes a rock and throws it on the red tile, causing it to spew fire.

"Woah, not getting good vibes from this room," said Sprig. "Well, time to turn back," said Polly. "Thanks for playing everyone." "Hold on gang, look," said Hop pop as he pointed to the walls.

The walls suddenly glow with more ancient ruins. Darrel takes his staff and translates them. "They say: A dangerous room, what to do? Don't be jealous of my hue." "Who's hue?" Sprig asked.

Darrel and Marcy look to the floor coming up with a way to get through. Darrel then looks at the blue tiles. "I wonder." He throws a rock at the blue tile and a spiked hammer crushes on the very spot. "Of course."

"Guys, I've got an idea," said Darrel. "What is it?" Anne asked. "If the pink and blue tiles are booby trapped, then the green tiles..." Before he could say anything else, Marcy took a running start and jumped on the green tile. "Hah, solved it!" she cried. "Jeez, Marcy. Again with the heads up," said Darrel. "You're going to give me a heart attack."

"Take the green tiles guys," said Marcy. "Don't be jealous of my hue. It's a reference to green, the color of envy." The amphibians nod, getting the gesture. "I honestly thought that green was the answer because it's a green temple," said Cronaxx. "It's not that hard to point out that green is the safe color."

"I have a lot of green friends who would find that offensive," said Hop pop. "But, why hasn't the door opened yet?" Polly asked. Darrel looks to the second green tile near Marcy. "Down there," he said. "Looks like someone else needs to go down there and press that square."

Anne and the others were unsure, except for the salamanders. "Are you sure Darrel?" Anne asked. "If you're unsure, it's okay," said Darrel. "I can do this myself. I've seen this done in adventure movies, and most movies with two safe squares means it unlocks hidden doors."

But before he could make the jump, Anne stepped up to the plate. "Wait! I'll do it," Darrel turned to Anne. "Are you sure?" he asked. "I'm sure," she replied. "I mean, if anything, I should trust your judgement."

Anne takes his hand and continues talking, "I know you wouldn't let anything happen to me." Darrel smiled, "Then this should be easy. Just stand right here and don't move. I'll get you there with levitation."

Darrel uses his magic to transport Anne to the green square. Marcy, watching from her end, was awed by their devotion for each other. Darrel gets her there safely and Anne presses down onto the tile, unlocking the door, and disabling the traps in the room.

"Consider the stone charged, baby!" Marcy cried. The group reach the stairwell to the next puzzle and climb up. "That's really thoughtful of you helping us out," said Hop pop. "Thanks for everything, Darrel." "No problem, Hop pop," said Darrel. "We're family. And who knows. Maybe things would've been different hadn't we met in the first place."

At the top of the stairs, the group makes it to the entrance of the final puzzle. "There's more writing," said Marcy. "Darrel, would you do the honors?" "I'd be delighted," said Darrel.

He takes his staff again and translates the ruins, "Few have the brains to make it to this door. But are you wise enough to solve what's in store? Interesting." "Yep! Let's go!" Marcy leads the group to the third trial, very anxious to know what's next.

The group looks over to see what looks like a chessboard over a ray of light. Marcy squealed in excitement, "I don't believe it. It's Flipwart!" "What's Flipwart?" Anne asked. "Is that like chess, back home?" Darrel asked.

"Exactly, but to the max," replied Marcy. "A strategy game I learned in Newtopia. I got so good at it, I even beat King Andrias."

"Impressive," said Hop pop and Cronaxx. "They say King Andrias is one of the best Flipwart players around."

"He's not the only best player of Flipwart," said Cronaxx. "It's true," said Tint. "Uncle is like the Salmie Spawner of Flipwart." "Great players of Flipwart are always one step ahead of their opponents," said Cronaxx.

Marcy goes to the board, and finds the pieces on the other side stuffed in a drawer. "So, both sides have a wart, right? And they're

trying to flip it! Each piece has a different set of abilities. These archers, for example, can only attack in a straight line. Oh, I love this game!"

Hop pop looks over to the side and finds more writing on the wall. "Hey Marcy, what does this say?" he asked. "Any commander whose wart falls may never set foot inside these temple walls," replied Marcy.

"Looks like Marcy and Hop pop beat you to it, Darrel," said Anne. "I didn't have time to see it," he replied. "But it sounds like Marcy only gets one shot at this. She loses, and we can't recharge the stone." The room goes quiet, feeling dreary with suspense.

Marcy, however, wasn't worried. "One shot is all I need. But first, to set up the board." As Marcy places the pieces on the board, a trap door suddenly opens under Polly. She screams as she falls in, scaring the group.

Then, out of nowhere, the lights fill the room, revealing a giant Flipwart board. Polly comes out of the hole in place of the piece Marcy placed on the board. "Polly! Are you okay?" Sprig asked. "Okay? I've got a sword, baby," said Polly in a cheery way. "I'm doing better than all of you!"

Darrel and Anne grew weary about what's about to happen. "Marcy, I think we need to stop," said Darrel. "He's right, this could get dangerous," said Anne. "We don't have a choice, guys," said Marcy. "You wanna get home right? Then, we've gotta play or we'll never recharge the stone."

"She has a point," said Hop pop. "Trust me, okay?" said Marcy. Anne and Darrel reluctantly agree. "I hope she knows what she's doing," said Anne quietly. As Marcy continued placing pieces on the board, Sprig and Hop pop took the places of the bishop and the pawn. Then, Cronaxx and Tint took the position of the archer and another pawn.

"Get ready, you two," said Marcy. "There's a good chance you guys are next." Marcy completes the board, and Anne takes the position of the piece riding the heron. Darrel was still off the board. "Guess I'm sitting this out," he said.

But then, he falls into position on the board and he takes the same piece Anne's in. On the opposite side. This development shocks the group. "Darrel, no!" Tint cried. "Traitor!" Polly cried. "Guys relax," said Darrel. "I'm not going to badly damage the pieces." "Well you could always sabotage the other team," said Anne.

Suddenly, magical braces appeared on Darrel and Anne's wrists, limiting their movements on their arms, same with the amphibians. "What's going on?" Sprig asked. "Our hands are tied, literally," said Hop pop. "It's the Flipwart Board," said Cronaxx. "It's making sure we play by the rules."

"Don't worry everyone," said Marcy. "I'll just play well enough so none of you gets hurt. It'll be like hard mode!" "You wouldn't be saying that if you were the pawn," said Sprig to himself.

"Alright," said Darrel. "Standard tradition is that white moves first, right?" "That's right," replied Marcy. "Alright, make your move, Marcy," said Darrel. "And then, we play."

Marcy makes the first move, and in response the board moves her piece. "Now, let's see how they respond," said Marcy. The temple moves their first piece, destroying the pawn in the process, and scaring Sprig and Tint. But Marcy was most excited.

Throughout the rest of the trial, Marcy kept playing her moves and the temple responded with what to play next. The amphibians and Anne worked well together, but Darrel's piece was making it difficult for them. All the while, they tried to avoid each other, and make sure they didn't attack.

Near the end of the game, most of the pieces were destroyed, and the group was tired on the field. Marcy paid most of her attention to

the board, and prepared to end the game. "Gotta admit," she said. "This temple's good. But not good enough." She places Cronaxx's piece in front of the wart, and Cronaxx prepares to fire his blast. "Gotcha! We win!" cheered Marcy.

But, as Cronaxx fired, the wart dodged the blast, surprising the group. "What!?" "Guys! This thing cheats!" Marcy cried.

Now it was the temple's turn. He takes Darrel's piece and charges at Anne. "ANNE! LOOK OUT!" Anne dodged his swing, but Darrel hit her heron's head. The group was worried about the humans. "Anne!" Sprig cried. "Marcy! Do something!" Tint cried.

"Alright, so what if it cheats?!" Marcy exclaimed. "Still not enough to beat me." She takes Anne's piece and moves away from Darrel's piece. Only for Darrel's piece to keep advancing on Anne's piece.

"This isn't working," said Cronaxx. "I still have more pieces," said Marcy. "If I can just attack from a different angle I should be fine." "Marcy! Sometimes, the way to win is to clear the board completely," said Cronaxx.

Darrel overhears his words, then looks to his heart. He took a deep breath and said, "He's right Marcy," said Darrel. "When it's your turn, use Anne to attack me." "What?!" Anne cried. "Darrel, no!"

Darrel smiled, "It's okay, Anne. We need to get back home, one way or another." Anne started to cry, "But, I can't do that to you. I love you!" Her statement got everyone's attention. Including Marcy's.

"I love you so much, I just can't hurt you. You clearly have no reason for any of us to hurt you. You are the nicest person I've ever met. That anyone's ever met. I know we're trying to get back home. But I want us to go back in one piece. You say there's no other choice, but that's not true. You do have a choice. Besides, there's no one else in this world like you, Darrel Loyallitat."

Darrel smiled and produced a few tears from her heartfelt speech. He nods, "I love you too, Anne Boonchuy. I'd hug you, but, magical restraints." Marcy watched them from above, seeing them in a tough situation made her realize she's making a terrible mistake. She's pinning them against each other, and for what? To charge a stone?

"What am I doing?" she asked herself. "Then again, sometimes the way to end a game is to stop completely," said Cronaxx.

Then, Darrel's hands start moving on their own, and Marcy hasn't made her move yet. "The temple's impatient for moves!" he cried. "Look out Anne!" Tint cried.

"What? No!" Marcy cried. "Darrel! Anne! Who cares about this stupid game? I forfeit!" She knocks over her wart, symbolizing her ending the game. However, the game was still intact. "It's not working! Maybe I have to flip the big wart too." "If you think it'll work! Do it!" cried Darrel.

Marcy makes her way onto the board, but the game defends Marcy's actions and attacks her. Sprig and Tint block her archers' attacks with their shields. Marcy then takes Sprig and Tint and throws them at her wart, flipping it upside down.

Her wart explodes and the pieces reduce to dust. The spell breaks from the amphibians and Anne and Darrel, and the two hug with joy. "I'm glad you're okay Anne," he said. "Me too," she said.

"Marcy!" Tint cried. The group head over to see Marcy slump in defeat. "Why did you throw the game?" Hop pop asked. "Because it wasn't worth seeing any of you get hurt," replied Marcy. "I got so caught up in proving I was smart enough to win, I couldn't see what I was about to lose. What Anne or Darrel were about to lose."

"Marcy, you're already smart," said Darrel. "You're as smart as the average wizard," said Tint. "In your defense the game was a cheat," said Sprig. "You may be obsessive, but you are smart," said Polly.

Marcy smiled, "Thanks Sprig, Tint, Polly." Then, the temple glowed arrows, showing them the way out. The group follows the arrows out, but Marcy still feels defeated.

"Guess we won't be charging the stone today, huh?" Anne asked. "No," replied Marcy. "And since I lost, I'm not allowed back in the temple." "It'll be okay, Marcy," said Darrel. "I'm sure there's another way."

"Hey guys!" Tint cried. "The arrows are still guiding us. Look." And Tint was right, the arrows inside the temple are leading them somewhere outside the temple grounds. The group follows the arrows leading them back to the outhouse.

"Wait a second," said Marcy. "Cronaxx, what was it you said about wizards?" "That we see what others do not?" Cronaxx asked. "Exactly," said Marcy. She opens the door to reveal a green lit room. The group gasps in amazement. "Wait, it can't be," said Marcy.

"But it is," said Darrel. "This is where we charge the stone!" "But we failed," said Hop pop. "Not quite," said Cronaxx. The hole in the ground opens up a column then the last of the ancient ruins. He looks at the writing on the wall and reads the inscription.

"Only the worthy will have the wisdom to choose whether it's more important to win, or have the humility to lose. A choice was made to save thy friends and, honestly, doesn't that make you a winner in the end?"

"That last bit was oddly casual," said Anne. "It all makes sense now," said Darrel. "That temple wasn't testing Marcy's intelligence, but her humility. To have strong humility, you must know when it's okay to accept a loss, just as well as a victory. Pride leads to disgrace, whereas humility comes wisdom." The group was amazed by Darrel's quote, but pushed it aside to charge the stone.

Marcy takes the stone onto the column and the gem starts glowing bright. Marcy's eyes glow green for a bit, but then drain its color just

as the stone flashes. Once the flash died down, the gem was green again.

"We did it!" Tint cheered. The group celebrated for a bit until the stone beamed a bright light out of the room and into the wilderness. "I guess we have a location to the second temple," said Cronaxx. "That's convenient," said Hop pop.

"I should be able to triangulate its location with a bit of work," said Marcy. "This just keeps getting better!" "Alright!" Anne cheered, "One down, two to go!"

Just as the group leaves, Hop pop unintentionally steps on Darrel's shoelace. Causing Darrel to trip suddenly into Anne's face. The two unintentionally kiss, causing Polly to gag. "Sorry, Darrel," said Hop pop. "It's okay, Hop pop," said Darrel, smiling at Anne. "Everything's okay."

The group leaves the temple and depart for Wartwood. "It would be nice to go to the next temple," said Cronaxx. "However, after what we've experienced, I think it's best if we take a break. Wouldn't you agree?" Marcy nodded, "Fair enough."

Back at Wartwood, it was dark and the group was ready to go to sleep. But for Darrel, he just couldn't sleep. A sharp pain fell through his head like a spear in his brain. He clenches his head and his eyes glow bright. 'What's happening to me?'

He hears a voice that's oddly familiar, 'The prophecy is being undone as we speak, my lord. Soon we will have our revenge.' Then, he closes his eyes and sees a vision of multiple eyes staring down on him.

He suddenly wakes up feeling jumpy, and scared. 'What was that-that monster?' he thought. 'And wasn't that King Andrias' voice? Something big is going on, and like it or not, we're in the midst of it.'

New Wartwood

Chapter 39 - New Wartwood

Morning began to arrive in the town of Wartwood. And with it a whole new day for the Plantars. Considering the fact that Marcy is taking up shelter in the fwagon. And that the group has recharged the first stone. However, not all of them are ready for a new day.

Ever since he felt a dark presence looming around, Darrel barely slept a wink. He was scared to even think about what was in his head. He tried many things to fall asleep, but they just didn't work. So he decided to walk it out.

Darrel walks around outside, looking awfully tired. Luckily for him, all that time he spent walking made his head feel so heavy. He enters Bessie's stable, trying not to wake him or Joe Sparrow. He softly lays down on the haystack and gently drifts off to sleep.

That is until Joe Sparrow and Bessie yawned to start the new day. Then, Marcy ran in the stables cheerfully saying, "First day in Wartwood!" She grabs Joe Sparrow and flies off into the town of Wartwood. "Keep it down," said Darrel. "I barely got any sleep."

But Marcy was too far away to hear Darrel's comment. Later, Cronaxx finds Darrel in the stables, and gives him a herbal tea to get his energy back. "Couldn't sleep?" he asked. "I felt a dark presence," replied Darrel. "It felt so real." "Maybe some time away from magic training will do you good," said Tint. "Sounds like a plan," said Cronaxx.

At the town square, Darrel finds Marcy sitting by the statue. "Morning Darrel," said Anne. "Morning Anne," said Darrel. "Think Marcy's having a bad time with the citizens?" "Only one way to find out," said Anne.

The two humans approach their friend. "Hey Mar Mar," said Anne. "How's your first day in Wartwood going?" Darrel asked. "Oh great guys," said Marcy. "Did you know this entire town is built on top of a swamp but never sinks? That's because the designers knew exactly how heavy to make everything."

"That's a cool fact," said Anne. "What else did you learn?" "I also learned that small communities like this don't take kindly to strangers," replied Marcy. She sits back on the pedestal and says, "which means, I don't have a chance."

"Don't take this the wrong way Marcy," said Darrel. "That's how the town is; slow to accept, slower to respect." The trio see an angry mob right next to them, ready to attack. "Yeah yeah, we get the point," said Darrel. "She's with us," said Anne.

The crowd leaves, but Anne and Darrel spot Polly among the crowd. "Polly! Are you kidding me?" Darrel asked. "I go where the mob goes, Darrel," replied Polly.

Darrel groans in disgust, and Marcy groans in disappointment. "They will warm up to you Marcy," said Anne. "It just takes time." "Time, or maybe a strategy," said Marcy coming up with a plan.

Darrel shook his head, "Uh Mar mar, I'm still going with the time option." "Come on, guys," said Marcy. "People are just another puzzle to solve. Operation: connect with Wartwood engage,"

Darrel kept shaking his head in defiance, "Marcy, people are more complicated than puzzles. I should know, that's why the only people I connect with are you guys and my family."

Suddenly, Marcy trips over and breaks the city statue, causing the citizens to hate her more. But, she fixes a concoction that helps stick the statue back together. Her actions cause Darrel and Anne, even some of the townsfolk, to be impressed.

"I can't believe it," said Darrel. "How did you do that?" "I took a sculpting class in Newtopia," replied Marcy. "You've been taking classes?" Anne asked. "I'm pretty much homeschooled when it comes to magic training," said Darrel.

"I did win the Newtopians over by improving the city," said Marcy. "I bet I could do the same here in Wartwood." "I guess that can work," said Anne. "Let's not go overboard with this," said Darrel. "I like the city just the way it is." "Nice!" cheered Marcy. "Come on guys, show me all the cruddy things wrong with this town." "Where do we start?" Anne asked.

Throughout the whole day, Anne, Marcy, and Darrel were looking for places to fix up the town. First, they filled up the potholes on the mud tracks. Next, they redesigned the streetlamps and made sure they were working for the night time. Then, they remodeled the fences, and gave them a fresh coat of paint.

Their renovations of the town started to amaze the citizens of Wartwood. However, they were still skeptical about Marcy's presence. "Nice dudes," said Anne. "The town looks great." "I gotta admit, it's like seeing a new Newtopia in these farmlands," said Darrel.

"Thanks guys," said Marcy. "But I still haven't done enough, I need to go bigger." "Did someone say bigger?" asked a familiar voice. Mayor Toadstool arrives in Wartwood with a hot air balloon version of himself and lands in front of the humans.

"Never seen that balloon before," said Anne. "Spared no expense," said Darrel. "Marcy, meet Mayor Toadstool," said Anne. "He's like the Monopoly man had a baby with a piece of fried chicken." "Or a gentle bald giant who works as an unpopular barber," said Darrel.

"Those better be compliments, you two," said Toadstool. "So, you're the local toad?" Marcy asked. "Right on the money, uh huh," replied Toadstool. "And speaking of money, are you the one who's been making all these delightful little improvements to our town?"

Marcy said yes, making Toadstool smile with an idea. "Gotta hand it to ya, I find your work mighty impressive," he said. "How'd you like to help me make some bigger improvements? I have the mind to turn this poor dump little town, into a real money making tourist attraction."

Marcy beamed with delight, thinking this is her one shot of earning the town's trust. "If I make this town super successful, then people will have to accept me." "Yeah, sure whatever," said Toadstool. Toadie gives Marcy the plans and Toadstool instructs her to look at them.

"I'm not so sure about this, Marcy," said Anne. "Any plan of the mayor's is sure to go belly up." "Anne's right," said Darrel. "And besides, if anything goes wrong, Mayor Toadstool will find every right to blame you. You want his plans on your conscience?"

Marcy thought for a second and said, "You're probably right guys." And so the trio return to the Plantar farm to settle for another night. Luckily for Darrel, he was able to sleep throughout the whole night without any nightmare to wake him up.

The very next morning, Darrel wakes up feeling bright and cheery. "Looks like someone woke up on the right side of the bunk bed," said Anne. "I gotta say Anne, helping out Marcy was a good way to ignore the dark images from my head," said Darrel.

"Hey guys," said Tint. "You need to come out here, Wartwood has changed." Darrel and Anne follow Tint, and the rest of the group into the town square. Along the way, they find the buildings constructed as classy as the ones in Newtopia.

"What in tarnation is going on here?" Hop pop asked. "This place looks closely related to my favorite amusement park," said Darrel. "Oh no, she didn't," said Anne, realizing what's going on. The group sees a performance in the center of town, and Marcy and Toadstool run up the stage.

"Good morning ladies and gentle frogs," said Marcy. "And welcome to New Wartwood!" said Toadstool. "Your city is new and improved. Thanks to the work of myself and Mayor Toadstool."

"Gone are the days of stump stores of Wartwood, replaced by newly imported Newtopian marble," said Toadstool. "Feast your eyes on the new clock tower," said Marcy pointing to the giant toad that looks with every tick of the clock. "And finally, may I present the new and improved town square statue!" Marcy and Toadstool unveil the statue, revealing it to be solid gold and muscular.

"And there's more to come," said Marcy. "I don't think you all realize what you got here. So why don't you just ruminate, whilst I illuminate your possibilities."

A Town Like This - Marcy Wu (Original song - A Friend Like Me)

Well Toad Tower had them Four Armies

Newtopia had a thousand years

But Wartwood you in luck 'cause up your sleeves

You got a brand of help that never fails

You got some power in your corner now

Some heavy ammunition in your camp

You got some punch, pizzazz, yahoo and how

See all you gotta do is say my name

And I'll say

Welcome to New Wartwood!

The food? You can't resist

Let me take your order

Jot it down

You ain't never seen a town like this

Ha ha ha

Life is your restaurant

And I'm your maitre miss

C'mon whisper what it is you want

You ain't never seen a town like this

Yes sir, it prides itself on service

Wartwood's boss

The king, the shah

Say what you wish

It's yours! True dish

How about a little more Baklava?

Here look at column "A"

All down to column "S"

I'm in the mood to help you dudes!

You ain't never seen a town like this

(Wah ah ah! Oh My)

(Wah ah ah! No No!)

(Wah ah ah! My my my!)

Can your town do this?

Can your town do that?

Can your town pull this, out its little hat?

Can your town go, Poof!

Well, looky here

Can your town go, Abracadabra, let 'er rip

And then make the sucker disappear?

So don't cha sit there slack jawed, buggy eyed

I'm here to answer all your midday prayers

You got me bona fide, certified

You got a girl for your chare d'affaires

I got a powerful urge to help you out

So what-cha want? I really wanna know

Y'all got lists that's three miles long, no doubt

Well, all you gotta do is rub like so - and oh

Welcome to New Wartwood, stop now and make a wish

I'm on the job, you small nabobs

You ain't never seen a town, never seen a town

You ain't never seen a town, never seen a town

You ain't never seen a town like this

You ain't never seen a town like this

The crowd roared with applause and whistles. Then they went exploring, shopping, and browsing in the town as marching music played in the streets. Mayor Toadstool and Marcy couldn't feel any happier with their accomplishments.

Anne and Darrel, however, were uneasy. "Mar mar," said Anne. "Are you sure this is a good idea?" "Isn't this great?" Marcy asked them. "We've completely transformed the place. Now everyone will have to accept me."

"That's not how this works," said Anne. "People will accept you, when they accept you." "Yeah," said Marcy. "Look guys, you found a way that worked for you. And I found a way that worked for me."

While looking at the buildings, Darrel suddenly realized something. "Marcy, did you say that Wartwood was built on top of an entire swamp?" he asked. "Yeah, why?" replied Marcy. "Exactly how heavy are these buildings?" Darrel asked.

Then all of a sudden, the ground started to shake. Then cracks formed from the ground, surrounding the city. "What the heck is going on?!" Anne cried. "Wartwood is sinking!" Darrel shouted. "Marcy and Toadstool must've built so much over the swamp that the weight can't take it!"

"I for one, refuse to learn anything from this!" Toadstool called out. Then, he retreats, leaving his town in peril. "Typical Toadstool," said Tint. "What do we do now?"

"Well, they're not going to like me after this," said Marcy. "But, I can at least make sure that everyone lives. Come on, guys!" Marcy reaches out to Darrel and Anne, and the two take her hands. "Right on," said Anne. "All the way," said Darrel.

Marcy calls out to Joe Sparrow and the three evacuate the townsfolk. Then, they use Joe Sparrow and Darrel's magic to lighten the load of Wartwood. They throw away all of the Newtopian marble, the head of the new clock tower, and finally the golden statue.

Wartwood stops sinking and resurfaces from the water. Joe Sparrow lands and the three humans climb off. "We did it guys," said Marcy. "Total success!" However Darrel taps her shoulder, giving her a nervous look. "Uhh Marcy?"

He points to the townsfolk with disappointed looks on their faces. Sure Marcy saved them, but she was the one who almost caused the city to sink in the first place. Marcy knew what she had to do. "I think you know what to do here," said Darrel. "I know," said Marcy.

She looked to the townsfolk and said, "I'm so sorry everyone. I mean, you all are really important to Anne and Darrel, and I know how much you love them. And, I guess I wanted you to like me too, but I took things way too far."

Mrs. Croaker approached the apologetic human and said, "Marcy was it? I think I speak for all of us when I say, we're all pretty mad at you." "To be fair, I shoulder just a bit of blame here," said Mayor Toadstool. Mrs. Croaker tells him to zip it and turns back to Marcy.

"You're a walking disaster who doesn't know when to quit. You nearly destroyed the town and killed us all in the process. In other words, you're just like Anne and Darrel when they got here."

Marcy perked up, "Huh?" "They're not wrong," said Darrel. "When I first got here, my magic created a light show in Stumpy's diner. No one got hurt, but it did cause a loud ruckus." "We didn't trust Darrel or Anne when they arrived," said Wally. "But eventually we grew to liking them. And we would do the same with you."

The whole crowd laughed, and so did the three humans. "Just be patient, and I'm sure you'll fit in eventually," said Mrs. Croaker. "Fair

enough," said Marcy. "Thank you everyone, I'll do my best. In the meantime, at least let me clean this mess up."

Marcy jumped straight to work, fixing up shops and houses throughout Wartwood. "I gotta say, she's pretty amazing," said Wally. "Yep, she's one of a kind," said Anne. "The best of the best," said Darrel.

Like to give a shoutout to an anonymous reader who gave me the idea to include a fan made version of 'Friend Like Me' in this chapter.

Friend or Frobo?

Chapter 40 - Friend or Frobo?

The next day, the group heads into town to relax. Marcy was riding shotgun with Hop pop, while the rest of the group rode in the wagon from behind. Polly, out of everyone, was most excited to spend the day however she wanted.

"This is so great," she said. "Our first day in forever with no responsibilities." She hops out of her bucket and sits next to Hop pop and Marcy. "So, what are we going to do?" "You'll see," said Hop pop.

The group arrives in front of a place called the seed store. Polly grunted in boredom, "No." "Yup," said Hop pop. "Oh, come on," said Polly. "Don't worry Marcy, we don't have to go into the boring old-"

"This is so cool!" Marcy cried, surprising Polly. "A store just for seeds? Why, we could be there for hours." "Don't tempt us," said Cronaxx. "I may not be very excited, but I am all in for this activity."

The three laughed it off, then Cronaxx spoke like he was giving a basic lesson to Tint. "The seed," he began. "All the magic of creation exists within these things. They start off as small and insignificant. But when you give them time and patience, they blossom into something beautiful. The rarest things in life where you get out what you put in."

Hop pop and Marcy head inside, and Cronaxx stays behind a bit in hopes to bring Tint and Darrel inside. He finds Sprig and Anne playing a game on her phone and Darrel practicing his powers on a seed.

"Now that the nerds are gone, you guys want to make mischief?" Polly asked the kids. "Sorry Polly," said Tint. "I want to see how

Darrel's doing this." "It's not that hard," said Darrel. "Cronaxx's lesson is really paying off."

"Anne! Sprig!" Polly cried. "You know, in the past, I would've said yes," said Anne. "But I think I'm getting a little too old for that nonsense." "Sorry Polly," said Sprig. "But me and Anne have changed. We're different now."

"Speaking of different," said Tint. "Don't you think your voice is sounding deeper Sprig?" "I haven't noticed," said Sprig. "I think we should focus our energy on more mature activities," said Anne.

The kids continue their business in the wagon and Polly keeps complaining about the lack of mischief the group causes. Cronaxx looks to Polly and smiles, "You know, you kinda remind me of Tint when he was your age. All he wanted to do was cause trouble."

Before Polly and Cronaxx knew, they were walking around town telling stories about Tint. "He really did all that?" Polly asked. Cronaxx chuckled, "Of course he did. But, that's okay. Taking care of someone takes a lot of responsibility, something I'm familiar with. At your age, you shouldn't worry about that."

Polly still grunted out of boredom, "Just enjoy your youth while it lasts," said Cronaxx. "But mischief is no fun when I'm alone," she said. The tail whips a can into a pile of garbage and the bags start rustling.

Cronaxx and Polly grew curious when they saw bright lights beaming at them. Then the lights hid behind the bags. The bags begin shaking again and the two see what comes out. A large brass covered frog-robot with extended arms. "Monster!" Polly cried. "Oh my frog! Stay back!"

Just as Cronaxx defends Polly, the robot does the same thing. The two grow confused as to what it's doing. Then, Polly approaches the robot slowly. She squints her eyes and the robot does as well. Anything Polly does, the robot does as well.

Cronaxx and Polly chuckle at the gestures, "It's no monster, it's just a big tadpole," said Polly. Cronaxx walked up to the creature, "So, big guy, any idea where you came from?" The robot stood silent. "Not a talker eh?"

Polly climbs up on its shoulder and said, "This thing looks like one of the fighting games from Anne's phone. What are they called? A Robo! Except it looks more like a frog. I'll call him Frobo."

Frobo gives off an excited posture and Polly climbs down. "What else can Frobo do?" Cronaxx asked. Frobo takes Stumpy's diner and uses its extended arms to lift the entire building all the way up to the sky. Polly was impressed, but Cronaxx was uncertain.

Something about Frobo made Cronaxx feel very uncomfortable. He felt like he was trying to remember what he couldn't, and he can't help it. Frobo was triggering his long lost memories, and Cronaxx had to try and remember.

His memory was blurry, but all he could recall before he stopped remembering were beams of red lights surrounding the dark night. Then, one of the creatures with the red eyes stormed into his hut. He takes something in his hand and then a bright light fills the room. Then he felt a flying sensation and a slam to his head, blacking him out.

He catches up with Polly and Frobo, but keeps a close eye on them. The two cause mischief in the town, the start swinging from rooftops. Cronaxx tried the best he could to follow them, but his legs grew tired and he couldn't keep up.

Back at the cart, Darrel and Tint see Cronaxx return slowly. "Looks like ol' Uncle's been trying to run again," said Tint. "Cronaxx," said Darrel. "What happened? Where's Polly?"

"You wouldn't believe me if I told you," said Cronaxx. "I'm in a world that's already strange" said Darrel. "Try me." "A giant robot is

bonding with Polly in town square," said Cronaxx. Darrel and Tint laugh, "You're right, I don't believe it."

Suddenly, the group hear a giant splash, then see a blast from where they're standing. "What was that?" Tint asked. "Let's check it out!" Sprig cried. As the kids got out of the wagon, Darrel turns to see Cronaxx with an uneasy look.

"Cronaxx, are you okay?" Darrel asked. "I'm telling you, Darrel," said Cronaxx. "What I saw, is triggering my long term memory somehow. I don't know why, but it must mean something."

Darrel picks up Cronaxx and joins the others. They find the crowd running away from the source. They find Polly in the crowd, and then see Frobo. "What is that thing?" Frobo shoots laser beams from its eyes and hits the buildings.

"Is that some kind of crazy frog robot?!" Anne cried. "Uhh, maybe," said Polly. "Well whatever it is, it's going to the junk pile," said Darrel as he got his staff in hand.

Just as Frobo was about to attack the crowd, the four got its attention. "Hey scrap heap! Over here!" Tint cried. Frobo marches towards them, and Anne and Sprig attack. They dodged and lunged at the rogue robot, but Frobo overpowered the two and threw them by the haystack.

"Anne! Sprig!" Darrel cried. Angry seeing his friends attacked by a machine, Darrel uses his powers to damage the clanker. But suddenly, his powers rendered useless and deflected off of Frobo's chest plate.

Darrel and Tint were most surprised. They just kept using their magical abilities on Frobo, until they were punched square in the face and thrown at the same haystack where Anne and Sprig are.

Just as Frobo was about to finish them off, Polly yells at everyone to stop. Everyone, including Frobo listened to her. "Frobo, I know you're

just trying to protect me. Everything you did today was because I asked you to. And now I'm asking you to stop."

Frobo showed no reaction, but was able to say one word, "Polly." The robot smiled and Polly was happy her robot friend understood her. "Well then," said Toadstool. "Now that it's calmed down, LET'S TEAR THAT THING APART!"

Polly defies the Mayor, "NEVER!" "Actually, I think there should be another way," said Darrel. "Yeah," said Anne. "After all, Polly really likes him." "Anne, Darrel, I know this town is no stranger to crazy at this point," said Stumpy. "But, come on!" Toadie cried. "It destroyed most of the town. Who's going to answer for this mess?"

"I will." The town turns their attention to Polly, feeling shocked and confused. "This wasn't Frobo's fault, it was mine. I taught him how to do all this. I'm sorry about the damage, I'll do what it takes to fix it all up. But leave Frobo alone, he's innocent."

"Frobo, say you're sorry." Frobo closes his eyes and utters his second word, "Sorry." "Uhh," groaned Toadstool. "I guess we've already accepted three monsters." "Yep," said Loggle. "I mean, what's one more at this point?"

Tint smiles at his formidable foe. "I guess you're one of us now," he said. Frobo turns his head and scans Tint. Then he said another word, "Brother." This word shocked the group, but mostly Tint. "Brother? How is Tint your brother?" Darrel asked. Frobo simply touches his chest plate, then Tint's heart.

Back at the seed store, Hop pop and Marcy walk out to find the town in ruins again. "WHAT IN TARNATION!?" The two see Frobo behind the crater he created. "Oh My GOSH!" Marcy cried out in excitement. "Is that a robot? Where did it come from? What is it made of? Can I have one?"

"What's a robot?" Hop pop asked. "Kinda hard to explain," said Darrel. "So, I know this is a lot to take in," said Polly. "But can we

please keep him? I'll be his big sister. I'm ready to take care of someone."

"I'm not so sure Polly," said Hop pop. "Sure seems dangerous."
"Maybe this'll change your mind," said Darrel. "Frobo, initiate farming protocol." And at that instant, Frobo raked the ground, planted seeds and a picket fence, watered the plants and grew flowers.

Hop pop was impressed, "Welcome to the family Mr. Frobo!" The gang return to the farm with their new artificial friend. But, Anne, Darrel, Sprig, Tint, and Cronaxx fall behind. A lot of questions came to their minds.

"Wow. First underground computers and now a robot?" Anne asked. "Do you guys think that thing is what got built in the ruins of disaster do you?" "It's a possibility, Anne," said Darrel. "What I don't understand is why did Frobo call Tint his brother? How are they related?"

"I don't know," said Sprig. "What do you think, Cronaxx?" They look at Cronaxx who shows a blank look on his face. "Cronaxx?" "Uncle?" He just walks away unresponsive back to the farm.

Cronaxx returns to Hop pop's study and rubs his head throughout the whole night. All those feelings, those images of the robot, the red eyes, dove deep inside his mind. Like it was trying to tell him something. Whatever it was, it was not friendly. "There's something about that bot, and I don't like it."

Three Naughty Necromancers

Chapter 41 - Three Naughty Necromancers

After another day spent in Wartwood, Tint started to feel bored with preparations for magic training again. So, the next day, he decided to go out and explore. It was hard for him to socialize with others he encountered. Considering the fact that he and his great uncle journey to other villages and spend only days there.

So this time, Tint has decided to try and make a friend with one of the townsfolk. He tried to make friends with Mrs. Croaker, but her pet spider wouldn't like extra company. Then, he tried Stumpy, however it was too busy at his diner. And finally, he tried spending time with Ivy, but Felicia's tea lessons were more important to her when she understood what they meant.

Tint had no luck making new friends around Wartwood. That is until he saw a puff of purple smoke in the shape of a skull. He delves deep into the forest and finds the source of the smoke. A frog named Maddie was working on dark magic, reviving a frog's corpse.

Tint cleared his throat, enough to grab Maddie's attention. "Oh, hey there. I didn't expect you to find me," said Maddie. "I hope I didn't interrupt you," said Tint. "I was just bored at the farm. So I came to town, hopefully to make new friends."

"Is that a dark revival spell you're working on?" Maddie nodded, "Yeah, wanna join me?" "I'm not sure," said Tint. "My Uncle insists that I don't practice dark magic." "You won't need to," said Maddie. "I'll be doing most of the work, and you can just watch me."

Tint nodded, "Okay, I'm Tint by the way." He reaches out his hand for a handshake. "I'm Maddie," she said as she shook his hand. "I can see in your lonely soul now." "Sounds creepy, but thrilling," said Tint.

So Tint sat back and watched as Maddie stirred her spell. She dropped her ingredients in her cauldron. "Seed of swordspine, one cup of dirt from a widow's grave, add both to bubbling bog water, and finally, one half drop of worm snake venom."

The two were excited to see the potion in action. Maddie needed to insert the venom carefully. One mistake could ruin the potion. "Steady....steady...." It was calm and quiet, and then.

"Maddie, Maddie, Maddie!" Three tadpoles jump onto Maddie's head, making her drop the snake venom. "Woah, who are these little tykes?" Tinta asked. "Maddie groaned, "They're my younger siblings. Say hi to Rosemary, Ginger, and Lavender."

"What are you guys doing here?" Tint asked. "We were hoping that Maddie could play with us," said Rosemary. "Remember, sis?" Tint looked over to see Maddie groan again. "She was just showing me a spell she was working on," said Tint. "She's kinda busy, but maybe tomorrow?"

The three tadpoles groan in disappointment, "That's what she said yesterday." "Look, girls," said Maddie. "Mrs. Jonkins is counting on me to bring her pet Fleafy back to life." The kids look over to see a flea corpse on a table in dim sunlight. "Woah, looks like he's lived well," said Tint.

"Necromancy is really advanced magic," said Marcy. "You don't have to tell me twice," said Tint. "That's why my uncle forbids any dark magic within his lessons. He always tells me everything happens for a reason."

"Anyway," said Maddie. "This book says that only level two witches can pull off a spell this difficult." "What level are you now, Maddie?" Tint asked. "I've done only level one spells up until now," said Maddie.

To stop Maddie's descriptions, her sisters boo at her. "Magic is boring. And creepy. Let's play instead. Maddie used to juggle us

when we played." The three tadpoles jump up and down, chanting, "Juggle us!" causing Tint to shrug and let Maddie cave in.

"Just give me a few minutes to wrap this up, and then we can play," she said. The tadpoles cheered and waited for Maddie. But her few minutes turned into three hours. Tint tried his best to keep them occupied by spinning them in the air with his magic.

"What happened to a few minutes, Tint?" asked one of the tadpoles. "These kinds of spells are pretty delicate and must be careful," replied Tint. "Hey Tint, can you give me a hand?" Maddie asked.

Tint puts her sisters down and approaches the cauldron. "I need you to stir carefully while I insert the next ingredient," said Maddie. "Okay," said Tint. As he carefully stirs, Maddie prepares to place her ingredient in the cauldron.

However, one of her sisters bumps into the two and spills the potion onto a tree. The tree comes to life and chases the five amphibians in the forest. "Tint!" Maddie cried. "I've got an idea, but I'll need your help." Tint nodded his head, "Just tell me what to do."

Tint casts a shield to protect Maddie's sisters, then follows her lead. After Maddie flings a sack of magic powder to sting the tree creature, Tint uses his powers to secure the tree to the ground. "That'll petrify the creature back to normal," said Maddie.

She turns to her sisters in anger, "What's the matter with you three?" "We were just trying to play with you," said Rosemary. "I'm sure you all mean well," said Tint. "But now, me and Maddie have to clean up this mess before anything else gets contaminated with her potion."

"He's right," said Maddie. "Go and help dad with the bakery or something." The two turn around and get to cleaning. "You know what they did was an accident," said Tint. "Yeah, but sometimes I wish they would just grow up," said Maddie.

Little did they know that her three sisters heard every word. They hop away in guilt. Then, Tint started hearing rustling from the bushes. He finds a tall silhouette that suddenly trips and falls on its face.

Tint smiles, knowing who it is. "Hey Marcy," he said. His statement caught Maddie off guard. "Oh yeah, Maddie, this is Marcy. Anne and Darrel's friend. I'm sure you're familiar with her." "Yeah, I am," said Maddie.

"So, how's your research coming along?" Tint asked. "It's going well," replied Marcy. "But I'm more curious about what I just saw. Was that like a plant based curse, caused by a faulty revival curse?"

"I'm impressed you knew that," replied Maddie. "Do you also have an interest in the dark arts?" "Are you kidding," replied Marcy as she takes out a Cynthia Coven Book. "I've read every Cynthia Coven book, five times. I've searched all over Newtopia for someone who could teach me. But magic users are so rare these days, until I came across Tint and his great uncle."

"Wow, no one else's been interested in what I do," said Maddie. "They usually run away screaming." "Well, the two of us are running towards the dark arts," said Tint. "What do you say?" "I'm feeling like a beautiful friendship, between the three of us, is about to start," replied Maddie.

"You two want to help me bring a dead flea back to life?" Marcy and Tint look at each other with smiles on their faces. They nod, agreeing with what they're about to do. Marcy moves some of her hair to match Maddie's hairstyle. "Do I ever?" Marcy replied.

Maddie, Marcy, and Tint grab a couple of backpacks and Maddie gives them a list of items. "If we're going to bring this dead flea back to life, we're going to need a few more ingredients." So throughout the rest of the day, the three magic scholars went straight through the list.

Some ingredients were disgusting to collect, some were even slightly impossible. But the three pulled it off. There was also a time when Cronaxx came by to check on his nephew. "Hey Tint, are you spending time with Marcy and that girl?" "Yeah uncle," replied Tint. "We're just gathering ingredients for a potion."

"What kind of potion?" Cronaxx asked. Tint knew his uncle wouldn't want him working with dark arts, but he knew it was for a good cause. So Tint told a half truth, "We're making a health potion to help a pet flea feel better." Cronaxx squinted his eyes, trying to see the truth in his nephew. "Okay then," he said. "Just be careful. And come back when you're done."

Tint nodded, and returned to Maddie and Marcy to finish gathering the supplies. At the end of the day, the trio arrive at Maddie's father's bakery. "Well, this is me," said Maddie. "I hope my sisters are asleep. I do not want to deal with them right now."

"What's wrong with your little sisters?" Marcy asked. "It's a long story," Maddie replied. "I used to play with them all the time. Especially juggling. That was their favorite. Then, I got my own interest. Magic became my passion. My calling. I didn't have time to waste on kids stuff anymore. And ever since then, they've been so annoying."

"As an only child, I can't understand what you're going through," said Tint. "But I would give anything for siblings like the ones who love you." "Tint's right," said Marcy. "Don't you think that you should make some time for them occasionally?"

"Nonsense," said Maddie. "Being a witch is a big responsibility, guys. I've got more important things to do now than babysit." "Welp, you are the master," said Marcy. "See you at the sacrificial growth tomorrow for our unholy ritual."

Just as Marcy left, Tint felt uneasy with Maddie's decision. "Maddie, please," Maddie turns her head to Tint. "How many more broken promises to your sisters? You became a big sister before you

became a witch. They love you, and want to play with you. How long do you think that lasts? Soon, they may not want you to juggle them again. You have a few special years with your sisters, when they're the ones that want you around. After that, you're going to run after them for a bit of attention."

Maddie kept on listening to Tint's words. "Youth is so fast, Maddie. It's a few years, and then it's over. And you're not being careful. And you are missing it." Maddie took a deep sigh, "I'll at least think about it. Give me until tomorrow." Tint nods his head in understanding, and returns to the farm.

The next day, Tint and Marcy arrive at Maddie's ritual in the forest. "Maddie? Are you okay?" Marcy asked. "I am so done with my sisters," replied Maddie. "Maddie," said Tint. "Remember what we talked about?" "I did, and look how that turned out!"

Maddie points to her spell book with pages covered with crayon. "Sheesh, they didn't even color in the lines," said Marcy. "This is exactly what I was trying to tell you Maddie," said Tint. "Maybe we should-" "No!" Maddie cried. "I'm so close. They won't stop me from reaching level two."

"Let's get to resurrecting!" The trio gather around the flea corpse and pour the potion all over it. Tint waves his hands and recites dark omens to add more flare to the resurrection. The trio get closer to see if the spell worked, only to find a twitch.

The flea instantly gets up and rolls around. "IT'S ALIVE!" Marcy cried. "Finally, I'm a level two witch!" Maddie cheered. "Why do I get the feeling something bad is going to happen?" Tint asked.

And Tint got his answer. Just then, a giant tadpole leaped into the air screaming, "Maddie!" It was one of Maddie's younger sisters. She lands on the flea, shocking the trio. "Found you," said her sister in a deep voice. "Ginger?" Maddie asked surprisingly.

"You wanted us to grow up." The two other sisters came by to surprise Maddie more. "Well here we are." "Oh no, they didn't," said Maddie. "Didn't what?" Marcy asked.

"Come on, Maddie play with us. Hide and Seek!" The triplets jump up, causing the trio to run back into town. They give chase, destroying anything in their path.

Maddie, Marcy, and Tint quickly find a place to hide. "This is insane," said Marcy. "This is exactly what I was trying to tell you Maddie!" Tint cried. "Now your sisters have cursed themselves with a growth spell."

"All because I told them they needed to grow up," said Maddie. "They only did this to spend more time with me, and it's bad." "You're telling me," said Tint. "They did the spell all wrong." "How do you know that?" Marcy asked. "Because I did this to myself before," replied Tint.

"Her sisters are still growing!" "A curse like that should be done already," said Maddie. "At this rate, they're going to balloon until they explode!"

Suddenly her sisters find them in their hiding spot. "Found you!" they cried. "Now we hide, and you seek!" The three tadpoles bounce into town destroying everything in their path. Luckily for Darrel and the rest, they were outside of the city, away from the chaos.

Cronaxx spots the three tadpoles and calls the group out. Hop pop looks out on the town. "What in tarnation is going on?!" he cried. "I don't know," said Darrel. "But whatever it is, it's not normal." "It's dark magic," said Cronaxx. "And I've seen this done before." "Any ideas on how to fix it?" Sprig asked. "There is, but I'll need some help," replied Cronaxx.

Back in the town the three tadpoles continued growing, just as Maddie predicted. They started to cry because they're scared at

what they've become. Marcy, Maddie and Tint needed to come up with a plan. Luckily, Tint led the charge.

Maddie stirred the cauldron while Tint and Marcy gathered the ingredients for the antidote. "Okay guys," said Maddie. "I'm going to need you to make four doses while I calm them down." "Got it, teach," said Marcy. "But I'm not ready for that level of potion making.

"It's okay, Marcy," said Tint. "I got your back on this." "Wait, why four doses?" Marcy asked. "I'm guessing Maddie's growing herself too," said Tint. "That's right," said Maddie. She dumps her potion on herself and grows big, like her sisters.

As Maddie walks over to calm her sister down, Marcy and Tint get to work on the antidote. Suddenly, they come across a small problem. "We don't have enough ingredients!" Tint cried. "We need more," said Marcy. "Ahem..."

Tint and Marcy turn their heads to see the Plantars, Anne, Darrel, and a disappointed Cronaxx with more ingredients for the antidote. "We're going to have a talk about this later," said Cronaxx as he drops the ingredients in the cauldron.

"That should be enough," said Tint. "I'll take care of this one," said Marcy. She charges at the fully grown Maddie. She fires her crossbow and climbs up to Maddie's shoulder. Marcy cures her sisters and then Maddie, as they revert back to their normal sizes.

The rest of the group arrive at the scene. "Nice job with those antidotes guys," said Maddie. "It wasn't just us," said Tint. "Uncle Cronaxx arrived with the extra ingredients." "And what can I say," said Marcy. "I had a great teacher."

"You're the best sister ever," said the triplets. "No I'm not," replied Maddie. "Because of me, you three almost exploded. I got so caught up with my witch stuff, that I forgot that being an older sister is my responsibility too."

She felt so guilty, she felt she deserved to be yelled at. But instead, she got hugs from her sisters, making her, even Tint smile. "She may not be the one punished after all," said Cronaxx. "However." Tint gulped knowing, he was caught helping practice the dark arts. "Let's go home." "Hey, Tint," said Maddie. "Thanks for helping me with my sisters. I'm sorry I didn't listen to you sooner." "It's okay, Maddie," said Tint. "Just don't let go of them. They love you no matter what."

Later that day, the sun was going down, and the gang was on their way back to the farm. Tint had a feeling that he was in trouble, and so was Marcy, considering the fact she also practiced dangerous stuff. As they reached the hilltop, Cronaxx called to Darrel. "Darrel, take the others inside. I've got to teach my nephew a lesson."

Tint sulked his head in shame and fear. Darrel walked over, wasting no time. "Come, Marcy. Tint, good luck." The two humans catch up with the Plantars and enter the house.

"Tint!" Cronaxx called. Tint walked over to his uncle slowly. The two meet side by side, and Cronaxx takes a deep breath. "Tint, I'm very disappointed in you." "I know," said Tint. "This is exactly what I was protecting you from," said Cronaxx. "You disobeyed me by assisting in the dark arts. And what's worse, is that you lied to me."

Tint sighed, "I was only trying to help a friend. To be wise and powerful like you." "I'm only powerful when I have to be," said Cronaxx. "Being powerful, doesn't mean you go making trouble." Tint frowned and sulked looking away. "However, it wasn't your fault. And you were trying to help fix your friend's problem."

"But why would you get serious about dark magic?" Tint asked. "Even when you told me not to do it, I got the message clear as a bell?" Cronaxx looks down, "I guess deep down, I was scared. Scared that I might lose you."

"I guess even wizards can get scared," said Tint. "Even when they're one step ahead of everyone." Cronaxx chuckles, "That's because no

one messes with your family." "Our family, Uncle," said Tint. "We'll always have each other's backs, no matter what."

(They Live in You - The Lion King)

Ingonyama nengw' enamabala

Ingonyama nengw' enamabala

Cronaxx:

Night

And the spirit of life

Calling

(Oh, oh, iyo) Mamela (Oh, oh, iyo)

And the voice

With the fear of a child

Asking

(Oh, oh, iyo) Oh, mamela (Oh, oh, iyo)

Cronaxx:

Tint, let me tell you something I've learned from my teacher. Look at the stars. Great wizards that existed from long ago, look down on us from those stars.

Wait

There's no mountain too great

Hear these words and have faith (Oh, oh, iyo)

Ooh (Oh, oh, iyo)

Have faith

Hela hey mamela

Hela hey mamela

Hela hey mamela

Hela

They live in you (Hela hey mamela, hela)

They live in me (Hela hey mamela, hela)

They are watching over (Hela hey mamela, hela)

Everything we see (Hela hey mamela, hela)

In every creature (Hela hey mamela, hela)

In every star (Hela hey mamela, hela)

In your reflection

They live in you

Cronaxx:

So whenever you feel alone, just remember that those wizards will always be there to guide you. And one day, so will I.

They live in you (Hela hey mamela, hela)

They live in me (Hela hey mamela, hela)

They are watching over (Hela hey mamela, hela)

Everything we see (Hela hey mamela, hela)

In every creature (Hela hey mamela, hela)

In every star (Hela hey mamela, hela)

In your reflection

They live in you

Ingonyama nengw' enamabale

Ingonyama nengw' enamabale

"And after the way you handled yourself today, I believe you can amount to anything," said Cronaxx. "Thanks Uncle," said Tint. The two continued to look up at the stars until it got very late at night.

The Second Temple

Chapter 42 - The Second Temple

After a long well deserved break, the group gathers all the basic necessities they need to journey to the second temple. Out of all the members of the group, Marcy was the most excited of all. Though, Marcy told everyone to dress warmly because where the stone is guiding them could get really cold.

They take off on Joe Sparrow and Carpet. Their next leg of the journey takes them to the mountain regions of Amphibia. They pass a herd of Woolly Mantises along the way, and slip and slide on thick ice.

After recovering from a pile of snow, Marcy pops up. "Welcome to the amphibian arctic everyone!" The rest of the gang pop out of the snow. "I triangulated the tracking beam from the green stone. And..."

Marcy takes out the green gemstone and the beam focuses its mark straight ahead. The group climbed out of the snow and made tracks. "The temple can't be far now," said Darrel. "Who knows what we're going to encounter."

The group make their way to an open archway found in the clearing mists. The beam hits directly on a blue crystal. Then, blue inscriptions appeared on the arch. Anne smiles at Darrel, knowing what he has to do. He takes his staff and translates what they see.

"It says, 'Just beyond these snowy gates, a grueling perilous temple awaits'" "Uh, no it doesn't," said Polly. The group looks beyond the arch to find nothing. "Maybe the temple is invisible," said Sprig. "All the ancient text about this temple is super vague," said Marcy. "They just mention the word 'heart' a lot."

"Okay," said Hop pop. "Are we looking for something heart shaped?" "Maybe we have to rip somebody's heart out," said Polly. "Too dark," said Cronaxx. "CAW CAW!" cried a bird typed creature.

The creature swooped down, and the gang ducked. "Hey wait! I know that crazy bird," said Anne. The gang rush to follow Anne, following the bird. The bird lands by a tent not far from them.

"How do you know that bird?" Darrel asked. "Remember when I took the box to the bizarre bizarre?" Anne asked. Sprig looks at the sign that says 'Valeriana's mysterious goods.'

"Anne, didn't we meet her in the bizarre bizarre?" Sprig asked. "Yeah," replied Anne. "And she said she's been all over Amphibia, right? Maybe she's seen the temple."

The group approaches the tent in hopes of meeting her. Only to see an Out to Lunch sign hanging. "Ugh, why is she always out to lunch?" Anne asked. "Because it's the most important meal of the day," replied a mysterious, yet familiar voice."

They turn around to find Valeriana appear from behind a tree. "It's been a while, creature," she said. "And, Cronaxx? Is that you?" Cronaxx smiles, "Hello Valeriana. It's been years." "You two know each other?" Hop pop asked. "We've crossed paths on our journeys," replied Cronaxx.

"Do any of you, by chance, seek a temple to charge an ancient stone?" Valeriana asked. "Oh yes," replied Anne. "Do you know about the stones?" "Indeed," said Valeriana. "But, I'm not the only one who knows."

She points her staff at Cronaxx, claiming that he also knows. "You know about the stones, uncle?" Tint asked. "I may have," replied Cronaxx. "But, I can't possibly remember that long ago." "He's right," said Valeriana. "His memory is quite unique. However, something happened to it that even I can't interpret."

"And as for you. For charging the stone, are you worthy?" "Well, yeah," replied Anne. "Totally," said Marcy. "We shall see," said Valeriana.

The group enters the tent, and prepares to hear more about the stones. "Me and Cronaxx are the last of the Ancient Order," said Valeriana. "Our purpose was to study the sacred stones and temples." She opens a scroll revealing four figures and the four stones from the box.

"So you know where the temple is?" Marcy asked. "Indeed," said Valeriana. "And you possess the music box?" Anne takes it out and presents the box to Valeriana. "After all these years, it has returned. I should very much like to hold it."

Anne was very hesitant in doing so, and Valeriana reluctantly agreed. "To get to the temple, we must climb the freezing cliffs of Mount Mootoo. Leave your flimsy jackets and wear these caterpillar wool coats instead. Since this temple is my responsibility, you all must do exactly as I say. Or else you can say goodbye to ever finding it. Are we clear?"

She gives them the coats and the group prepare for the journey, "Clear!" "Clear and comfy," said Hop pop. "Good, follow me," said Valeriana.

Along the way, The group travels high up into the mountains. They climbed up the slippery cliffside with Valeriana ahead of them.

"Quickly, you three," said Valeriana. "I like to reach the temple in this century. How could adventurers this amazing be able to conquer the temple?"

Anne looks up at their guide with a grunt look on her face. "Don't listen to her guys," she said. "We're almost there."

Suddenly, the group gets ambushed by a four eyed cardinal. The cardinal screeches, scaring the group. Marcy however wasn't

affected. "Relax guys, it's just a cardinal. They don't eat amphibians. She's just saying hello." Then, the cardinal grabs Marcy by the beak.

Darrel uses his magic to rescue Marcy and then the cardinal turns its attention to the amphibians. "You said it was friendly!" Darrel cried. "I did," said Marcy. "Unless.... The coats. Guys, the cardinals also eat caterpillars."

"We need these coats to stay warm!" Sprig cried. "And look good," said Polly. "Marcy, what do we do?" Hop pop asked.

While Marcy was coming up with a plan, Anne removes her coat and throws it to the bottom of the mountain. The cardinal gives chase, leaving the group alone. The group climbed up to the top.

Anne starts to shiver over the loss of her coat. "You saved us Anne," said Hop pop. He starts to undo his coat to give it to Anne. "Here, take my coat." Darrel stops him, "No, take mine Anne. Hop pop will surely freeze." Darrel removes his coat and puts on his old winter jacket. "Are you sure, Darrel?" Anne asked. "Of course," replied Darrel. "I wasn't going to let you freeze up here."

"You think it's wise to abandon your coat?" Valeriana asked. "Impulsive and defensive, very unworthy qualities I must say." "Don't worry, Darrel," said Tint. "I'll keep a fire going from my hands to keep you warm." Tint casts a fireball and places it close to Darrel. "Thanks, buddy."

Along the way to the temple, Valeriana spoke again. "It's so fortunate that the music box fell into such average hands. How exactly did it come into your possession?" Anne and Marcy didn't want to tell her. But Darrel groaned in disgust. He knew they weren't going to tell them.

But that didn't stop him, "We stole it." This shocked everyone, except for Cronaxx, Tint, and Valeriana. "Come on, guys. The truth was going to come out sooner or later." "Yeah, but you don't just blurt it out," said Anne.

Then, the group felt the ground shaking. "What was that?" Polly asked. "Nothing much," said Valeriana. "Just an avalanche." Darrel acted fast and covered Anne and Marcy's mouths. "Shh. Guys, the last thing we need to do is yell." "The boy is right," said Valeriana.

The gang sees a chunk of ice sliding away from the group. "Thank goodness," whispered Tint. "Look!" Anne points to an igloo with smoke coming out of the chimney. "Someone must be inside. We have to save them."

"How? By running towards an avalanche?" Valeriana asked. "They are lost, child. I say we press on." "Well I say, I'm not," said Darrel. "I'm with you Anne." The two race to the igloo with the avalanche right on top of them. Anne bursts through the door, only to find a sign that says, 'out to lunch.' "How is everyone out to lunch right now?" Anne asked.

"Anne! The Avalanche!" Darrel cried. The two humans escape the igloo. Anne trips on the way out, and Darrel helps her back up. Darrel uses his staff to launch the two in the air. The two safely land by the cliff above the snow.

"Are you okay, Anne?" Darrel asked. "Yeah, I am," she replied. "Thanks for coming back for me." "I'd never let anything happen to my friends," said Darrel. The rest of the group arrive at the scene. "Are you two okay?" Marcy asked. "We're fine Marcy," said Anne. "It was just an empty igloo," said Darrel.

"We can keep going from here," said Tint. "Oh, that won't be happening," said Valeriana. "I've learned all I need to know from you, lot. Disobedient, foolish, impulsive, none of these qualities are worthy of the sacred stones. You don't deserve my help. Good luck finding that temple on your own."

Just as she was about to walk away, Darrel smirked, "I would've believed in those words, had you not set up the tests." "Huh?" the group gasped. Valeriana stopped in her tracks. "Ah, the young boy knows more than I could've imagined."

"How did you know those were her tests?" Sprig asked. "Elementary, my dear Sprig," replied Darrel. "When we were climbing up the mountain, Valeriana called the cardinal using a simple bird call. She knew that the caterpillar was the bird's natural prey. So one of us had to sacrifice our warmth to save us."

The group gasped in amazement. Cronaxx simply smiled at his second apprentice. "Then, when Valeriana told us to not bother the igloo, one had to rescue a complete stranger out of impulse. Little did I know that it was her igloo when I recognized her 'out to lunch' sign."

Valeriana smiled at his sleuthing. "All of these tests were to find out who has the heart to charge the next stone," said Darrel. He looks to Anne, which led to everyone looking at her. "What are you guys looking at?" she asked. "Anne, don't you get it?" Sprig said. "You're worthy to charge the next stone."

"Not quite," said Valeriana. "I just have one more question for her, and I would like the wise boy to join me on this one." She takes her tail-hand and tells the two humans to grab on. As they did, the three vanished with the wave of her staff.

Darrel and Anne stood on top of a tower, high above the cloudline. An aurora borealis appeared over their heads, like the one they saw on their first date. "This place is amazing," said Anne. "We made it," said Darrel. "Is this the temple?" Anne asked.

"Only when you ask this final question," said Valeriana. "Boy, show me the box again." Darrel takes the box out of Anne's bag and brings it to her. "Darrel, what are you doing?" Anne asked. "I'm trusting her," replied Darrel. "If she and Cronaxx are the last of the Ancient Order, that would make them the Guardians of the Calamity Box."

Valeriana smiled, "That's right, child. And now for your final question, girl: Is it true that you stole the box from where you found it?" Anne started to feel the guilt that came back to her on the day she took the box from the thrift store. She knew that Darrel was right when he told

her on the mountain, and she knew in her heart that she did steal the box.

"I did steal it," she replied. "I lied to my friends, and I am a thief. Those bad choices were mine and I'll own them. But making them taught me that it's always better to do the right thing. And that's what I'll do, by letting my friend give you back the box. Regardless of how much I don't want to."

Darrel was so happy that Anne owned up to her mistakes, that he held her hand and stood by her side. The two humans smiled and hugged, making Valeriana smile too. "We have been waiting for someone like you for such a long time," she said.

"Thank you for your help, boy." "You're welcome," said Darrel. "Umm, what's going on?" Anne asked. "She needed me to help you pass your final test," replied Darrel. Valeriana summons a smoke cloud around her, and as the clouds disappear, she appears in a white cloak.

"You have sacrificed your warmth for your friends, your safety for a stranger in need, and even owned up to your mistakes unlike any enemy I've encountered. But empathy alone isn't enough, for what is heart, without responsibility."

She inserts her staff in a hole in the center of the tower. The floor was surrounded by blue glowing light. "In the name of the temple, I declare you worthy," said Valeriana. "So it was true," said Anne. "What you said Darrel, all those tests were a trial." "And this 'invisible' temple," said Darrel. "Was the mountain all this time."

"So what is it you want?" Valeriana asked. "To charge the stone and return home," replied Anne. "So be it!" Valeriana takes out the second grey stone and places it in her staff's curve. The stone charges slower than the first one, making the three wait patiently.

Suddenly, they hear screaming coming from down below the mountain. Anne grabs the stone from the staff, partly charged, and

Valeriana sends the two back to their friends.

Darrel and Anne appear back from the top and rush down to their group. "Guys! What's wrong?!" they cried. However, when they got down, they found the group unscathed and unharmed. "Darrel, Anne, Marcy is showing us ridiculously cute animal videos on her phone," said Polly. "We looked for you guys," said Sprig. "But now we're taking a break."

"You guys are alright!" said Marcy. "And that's not all," said Darrel. "Show them, Anne." Anne takes out the box, showing them the blue gem charged and ready to go. The group clapped at the accomplishment. "But how?" Sprig asked. "We'll explain when we get back," said Anne.

Then, out of nowhere, a sharp pain started to hit Darrel's head. It felt like he was having a migraine. He falls to his knees grabbing everyone's attention. "Darrel! What's wrong?" Anne asked. He tried to speak, but he couldn't because of the pain. "He can't speak!" Marcy cried. "We gotta get back to the farm and see what's wrong," said Hop pop.

Marcy calls for Joe and Tint calls for Carpet. The group take flight back to Wartwood, with Darrel riding on Carpet. Cronaxx looks at Darrel as he opens his eyes. His pupils glow, but only his right eye flickers.

Darrel keeps groaning in pain, until Cronaxx casts a sleep spell to help ease it. "This should keep whatever's going on, stable in his mind," he said. "Whatever is happening in there, we gotta figure it out."

Inside Darrel's mind, he finds himself in front of the two colored gems on his travels. The blue gem starts flickering, which makes Darrel curious about what they're dealing with. Then, the eyes he felt appeared in front of him. They stared down upon him, whispering many things. "Sooooon," "We will rise again," "You're all doomed."

Darrel shut his eyes, trying to ignore whatever the voices were. "No. No! NO! GET OUT! LEAVE ME ALONE!" Suddenly, Darrel wakes up back at the Plantar farm. He finds Anne, Marcy, Sprig, and Tint sleeping in the basement too. Anne stayed by his side through the whole night, until she fell asleep.

The pain stopped, but his thoughts lingered in his mind. "Something's coming," he whispered. "Something big. Whatever that creature is, it's certainly not working alone." Darrel lays back into bed and drifts off to sleep.

All Stones Recharged

Chapter 43 - All Stones Recharged

After the incident with Darrel and the second temple, the gang agree to take it easy before they journey to the third temple. So throughout the whole day, Darrel and Anne spent the day walking in the forests outside of town. Cronaxx gave Tint the day off from magic training to try regaining his long term memory. Hop pop, Polly, Sprig, and Marcy were growing crops in the fields.

The next day, the group was prepared and ready for their last leg of the journey. So Darrel, Anne, Sprig, Tint, and Marcy were packing up crates in the fwagon. Hop pop and Cronaxx were organizing as many maps as they could bring.

"Can't have too many maps," said Hop pop. "You'd be surprised at how detailed my maps are," said Cronaxx. Polly comes in with a box of boom shrooms. "Definitely going to need these bad boys," she said. "And now to get more deadly weapons."

At the wagon, Darrel was storing a crate when Anne walked up to him. "Are you sure you're okay, Darrel?" she asked. "I'm alright," said Darrel. "Are you sure?" Anne asked. "You scared me when you clenched your head." "I'm sure, it's gone," said Darrel. "Whatever it was, it was trying to communicate with me. However, the link is still weak."

Darrel takes Anne's hands, "I promise, if it gets worse, I will let you know." Anne nodded, "Okay, Darrel. I trust you." "Hey guys, let's keep going," said Tint. "That temple isn't going to discover itself, you know."

The group continues packing until Marcy joins in on Anne and Darrel's conversation. "So, Anne, Darrel, I've been thinking," she

began. "We all agree that everything is riding on this last temple."
"Yup," said Anne. "That part we agree," said Darrel.

"And can we also agree that you guys need some new gear already?" Marcy asked. Anne looks down at her missing shoe to see her sock is really wearing out. As for Darrel, his cape is shown to have dirt marks and holes. "Fair," said Anne. "I suppose you're right," said Darrel.

"Good," said Marcy. "Because I already fly-mailed Newtopia's best armorer, and he's on his way right now to give you two whole new looks."

"That statement made Anne drop her box instantly. It even made Darrel freeze in fear. "Oh no," said Darrel. "New Look? I know what that means." "What does it mean?" Tint asked. "I cannot tell you guys how many times Sasha and Marcy have tried to give me A MAKEOVER!" Anne cried. "Is that bad?" Sprig asked. "Oh it's bad," said Darrel. "Take it from someone who recorded for their makeup tutorials. They were so humiliating, I had to delete the footage." "This is not going to end well," said Anne.

Later that day, a crab chariot arrives bringing the Newtopian armorer to the farm. A newt comes out wearing a stylish outfit and sunglasses. He holds his tail like he's on a fashion runway. "My name is Bernardo," he said. "Who is in need of my services? Never mind."

Bernardo walks over to Anen and Darrel, finding his customers. Bernardo takes his workspace inside the Plantar household. His assistants bring in his kits and wardrobes. "I'm not so sure about this Marcy," said Darrel. "I kinda like the way I am." "Yeah, me too," said Anne.

"Guys, we're probably going home soon," said Marcy. "Don't you want to live the fantasy a little? Try a new identity? Roleplay?" "Wait a minute," said Darrel. "What do you mean 'probably'? We *are* going

home." "Of course we are," said Marcy. "I just want us to make every second here possible."

"Anne, Darrel, who do you want to be?" Bernardo asked. The two were indecisive, so Bernardo and Marcy tried to experiment on many different forms of armor. However, they end in disaster. Either Anne and Darrel didn't like the armor, or Bernardo didn't like the armor, mostly both sides didn't like the armor of choice.

An hour or so passes, and Anne comes out with golden armor with teal decorations. It was hard to move in, and it was hard to see. As she got out the door, she fell down on her back. Darrel was hiding after calling for a bathroom break.

There was a ruckus going on outside, but Darrel didn't catch all the details. He simply came out of his hiding place when he saw a big explosion. "Help! Please!" Anne cried in her suit of armor. Darrel goes over and helps get her helmet off. Sprig and Marcy help as well removing everything but her chestplate.

"This is perfect," said Anne. "Just the chestplate?" Darrel asked. Anne nodded, "I think the reason I don't want a new look is because I'm finally happy with who I see in the mirror right now." She walks over to Frobo and looks at her reflection. "So whatever I put on, I just want to be able to see the same me looking back." Frobo smiled hearing her statement.

"So, what do you guys think?" "Minimalists, Bernardo likes," said Bernardo. "I think it really suits you," said Tint. "You're right it is perfect," said Marcy. "But a summer cut might be cute." Anne rejects the idea and turns to Darrel. "So Darrel, still thinking about keeping your look?"

Darrel takes a minute to think and says, "You know what, I'm going to make something that best describes me for a change." He turns to Marcy and asks her. "Do you still have any of those mage robes?" Marcy pulls out a set, "Sure do."

Darrel takes the robes and his cape, then he magically fuses them together to make a mage robe with his cape's color. His robes consist of silver linings, a gold amphibian symbol on the center, a hood just like his cape, and ripped details like his jeans at the bottom of the robes.

"I look good," said Darrel. "You look like a real wizard," said Tint. "Not yet," said Cronaxx. "I was thinking you would like this." He gives him a wizard hat just like his, only a bit bigger. "It belonged to my teacher, he was a toad."

Darrel puts on the hat and gives off a magical pose. "What do you guys think?" he asked. "I think you look great," said Anne. "It really gives off the wizard vibe in you." Anne kisses Darrel on the cheek, making him blush. Marcy geeks out at their moment.

"Come on guys," said Darrel "Now that we're stocked and geared up, I think it's time we take on the third temple." The group agreed and called upon their flying companions. They took off to where the gems took them. This time, they took Frobo with them on their journey.

Along the way, Tint grew curious about something. So he went to Darrel, "Say Darrel, I was curious as to how Sasha met Anne and Marcy in the first place." "Why don't you ask them," said Darrel. "Hey girls! Tint was curious about how you two met Sasha in the first place."

Anne smiled, "It was a long time ago. Me and Marcy were in kindergarten at the time. We were playing on the swingset at the local playground, until a couple of bullies pushed us off. We were there first, but they were bigger than us. And that's when we saw Sasha on the slide. She stood up to them and drove them off. We were so happy with what she did, we wanted her to hang out with us. We introduced ourselves and that's when we became best friends."

Tint was amazed with how Sasha stood up for them. Like she was one of those people they could look up to. It wasn't long until the

group arrived at the third temple.

Out of energy, Joe Sparrow lets go of Frobo and collapses from exhaustion. The group stood in front of an active volcano, where the third temple was said to be located. "This is it," said Darrel. "Now where's the entrance?"

Anne took out the box and the blue gem beamed in the direction of the first entrance. They see a pink glowing archway over what seemed like a rock. They find only little writing on the top of the arch.

"What does it say, Darrel?" Sprig asked. "Only one way to find out," replied Darrel. He takes his staff and the words translate to, 'Lift to enter, brah.' The group was stunned, "That's it?" Tint asked.

"I guess it means lift the rock," said Darrel. "Frobo, would you do the honors?" Frobo approaches the rock and carefully lifts it up revealing the hidden entrance.

"Darrel, I think it would be best for me and Tint that you should go alone on this leg of the journey," said Cronaxx. "Huh? Why?" Darrel asked. "Extremely hot climates do not go well with amphibians," replied Cronaxx. "I'm already shriveled up as it is, any more heat and I'll look like an old raisin."

Darrel looks to the entrance and nods, "Okay, just keep an eye out for any trouble." "Alright guys," said Anne, "Let's go crush this temple." The group, minus Frobo and the salamanders, enter the temple ready for anything.

The group enters a chamber surrounded by lava. "Whew, it's hot in here," said Anne. "You're telling me," said Darrel. "Alright gang," said Marcy. "There should be three challenges just like the two other temples."

"Ahh!" Darrel cried. "What's wrong Darrel?" Anne asked. Darrel points to the Plantars, "I think I know why Cronaxx and Tint wanted

to stay out," he said. The Plantars show to have shriveled up in the intense heat.

"Whoa, are you guys okay?" Anne asked. "Just a little dehydrated from the heat," Hop pop said in a raspy voice. "We'll be alright."

The group opens the doors to the first trial, a long pathway that is surrounded by molten lava. Suddenly, pink crystals started glowing from the side showing them ancient writing. Darrel translates the language and reads it out loud. "Whoa there, boss! Think you're strong enough to get across?"

"That's it?" Darrel asked. "I thought it would sound more ancient." "I have a distinct feeling this temple's about strength," said Anne. The words disappear and a stone trunk opens up weapons to the team. "Wonder what those are for," said Sprig in a raspy voice.

Then, out of nowhere, a giant lava centipede creature pops out of the lava. Anne takes a hammer and swings in its face, causing it to retreat back into the lava. "Man this thing weighs a ton," said Anne.

The group looks out at the trail to see more of the lava creatures leap out, jumping over the pathway. They scream out of fear, then recompose themselves. "Alright guys, it's hammer time," said Marcy. She takes a hammer and offers it to Polly, who fails to get a grip on it.

"Plantars, you'll have to get behind me," said Darrel. "You guys can't fight these things." "I'll defend you guys," said Anne. "Don't sweat it." Anne takes charge and swings at one of the creatures.

Behind Anne, Darrel casts a shield to protect them from flying lava drops. Another creature popped out from the lava, but Marcy couldn't lift her hammer. "Anne, get behind me!" Darrel cried. Anne rushed to her friends and got in Darrel's shield.

"What do we do?" Marcy asked. "I can't lift this hammer." Darrel removes his shield and shoots a fireball at one of the creatures. But

just as one creature retreats, another comes out the other side.

"Those things are too strong," said Sprig. "We can't keep fighting them like this." "He's right," said Darrel. "We need someone stronger, someone who rushes into battle. Someone like-"

Then out of nowhere, a slash was heard. The creature split in two and Sasha appeared in the air. She is shown to be fitted with the same style of armor. But with a shade of red. The group was stunned when she landed on the trail. "It can't be," said Anne. "But it is," said Darrel.

"Sash!" Marcy cried. "Oh my god! I can't believe -" "There's no time!" Sasha cried as she grabbed Marcy's hammer. "Follow me!"

The group does as she said out of impulse and runs across the trail. Sasha slams and swings at the creatures and Darrel keeps the rest safe in his shield. They make it to the end of the trail and close the doors behind them.

The group catches their breaths, after a tough passage across the first trial. Sasha plants the hammer on the ground, gaining the other's attention. Her startling appearance caused Darrel and Anne to stay on guard. They didn't forget what happened, where they left off.

"Sash?" Darrel asked. She turns around with a cheerful look on her face. "Hey friends, good to see you!" Her statement caught Darrel and Anne off guard. But Marcy, she was glad that she found them again.

"Hey Mar Mar," said Sasha. "Whoa, check out the new threads." She admired looking at Marcy's attire. "Speak for yourself," said Marcy. "Look at that armor. How did you even find us?"

"Yeah, how did you find us?" Darrel asked. "Simple," replied Marcy. "We heard you guys were traveling together and tracked you here."

Darrel perked up, realizing she didn't come alone. "And of course when you say we, you mean...?"

That's when Sasha's companion arrives behind them. Captain Grime of the Toad Army. Of course he is also shriveled up due to the volcano's extreme heat. "Even in this state, those things were no match for me," he said.

Darrel, Anne, and the Plantars got their guard up, but Sasha told them to relax. "Cancel the red alert. Seriously, we're not here to fight." "Oh no?" Sprig asked. Sasha shook her head, "Nope, the whole reason we were stalking you guys was..."

"So I could tell Anne and Darrel that everything that happened at Toad Tower was my fault." The group was set back, shocked and awed. Especially Darrel, who thought she would be head over heels. Not only did she humiliate her in front of the toad army, but she kissed her best friend in front of her.

"Really?" Anne asked. "Yup," replied Sasha. "It was wrong for me to put your frog friends in danger. And Darrel, I'm so sorry for the way I've treated you. I'm doubly wrong of me pushing you guys around."

"I wasn't expecting that," said Anne. "Neither was I," said Darrel. "Forgive me for being skeptical," said Hop pop. "But why the change of heart?" "After Toad Tower, Sasha and I lost everything," replied Grime. Darrel chuckled about that. "Yeah, sorry about the damages," he said. "Couldn't control my own strength."

"We had to go into hiding," said Sasha. "And I had a lot of time to think about things. But what are you guys doing in a haunted volcano?" Darrel stepped up, "To put it simply, we're charging the stones."

"Darrel's right," said Marcy. "The king of Amphibia told us that the music box can transport us back home. But the stones need to be charged at four temples first. This is the third temple."

"No way," said Sasha. "You mean we can almost go home?" "Yep," said Anne. "Each temple has a theme," said Marcy. "And this one appears to be Strength." "Then it's a good thing I showed up," said Sasha. "I won't argue there," said Darrel. "Something tells me that this is your temple."

"You frogs can wait outside if you'd like," said Sasha. "You'd probably just slow us down." "Hey, you can't tell them what to do!" Anne cried. Sasha just stood there and said, "Okay fine. It was just a suggestion. Now come on, let's move."

Darrel was really surprised, 'That's weird, normally she would fight back,' he thought. "Do you think she's changed?" Anne asked. "I don't know," replied Darrel. "But I think we should give her the benefit of the doubt." "Time will tell kids," said Hop pop. "Time will tell."

Along the way, Anne and the Plantars kept their guard up. Sasha looks back to see Darrel look at something, then stuff it in his pocket. She was sure that they wouldn't trust her after what happened.

The group enters the second trial that shows a barbell in the center of the room. They see another message on the wall. Darrel translates, "Sup Broseph?" "Do you even lift?" "Not even trying anymore," said Anne. "Yeah, this isn't thrilling," said Darrel.

"Hah, this is all me," said Sasha. "Wait, Sash," said Anne. "Marcy, Darrel and I have done these temples before. And, there's always some kind of catch. Let's just search the room before we try that thing."

"Actually Anne," said Darrel. "So far, this temple's been direct. We should just let Sasha do her thing." "Thank you, Darrel," said Sasha. She goes over to the barbell, lifts it up, and the door behind her opens. "Hey, what did he tell you?" Grime asked.

"This thing is going to be over before it starts," said Sasha. "Let's get going nerds." They enter the final room of the temple. The room

appears to look like an arena with a lily pad as the floor. "Alright," said Marcy. "This should be the final room."

The doors behind them shut and more writing appears on them. Darrel translates once again. "You've definitely got skill, no doubt. But it's time you learn what strength is all about."

The ground begins to shake and the group sees a giant stoned creature in front of them. It looked like a bodybuilding toad, prepared to fight. "Looks like it wants to fight," said Darrel. Sasha unsheathes her sword.

"Stay back everyone, I got this," she said. She takes her stance, but as the creature roars, the ground suddenly begins to feel heavy to the group. "It's like an elephant tick is standing on my back," said Grime. "That thing has somehow increased the room's gravitational force," said Marcy. "I can't get up," said Sprig.

"Sit tight guys," said Darrel. "We'll handle it." The four humans try their best to fight the gravity pull to the floor. The creature laughs at the predicament, and rolls a couple of boulders at them. They dodged the enemy's attacks, even Sasha pushed Marcy out of the way.

"Nice save, Sash," said Darrel. "Yeah, thanks," said Marcy. "No problem," said Sasha. Marcy tries to get up, but she can't. "Stand down," said Darrel. "Leave this to us." Darrel, Anne, and Sasha continue to make their way to fight the creature.

"Who would've thought, the three of us working together, after everything that's happened," said Anne. "Yeah," said Sasha. "Unbelievable, especially since you two still don't trust me." "I never said I don't trust you," said Darrel. "Well you certainly were acting like it," said Sasha. "Even after I apologized."

The creature jumps, shaking the room and loosening the stalactites. The three dodge them very quickly. "Of course we trust you, what do

you mean?" Anne asked. "What I mean is I've been watching you guys," replied Sasha. "You don't trust me at all."

"Well you did give us reason," said Darrel. "But do you think it was back at Toad Tower Sasha?" Anne asked. "Because it's not," said Darrel. "It was our whole lives. You've pushed us around for so much. I stood by your side because I was afraid to lose you. But your attitude just ended up pushing me farther away."

Sasha looks at them with guilt in her eyes. "I know," she said. "Listen," said Darrel. "I want to trust you again, really I do. It's just so hard after everything that's happened. If you're willing to move forward, if you really want to be our friend, then you have to work hard at regaining our trust."

The creature bellows and the ground glows pink, causing the three to fall flat on their faces. "It feels like my lungs are about to explode," said Anne. "It's over," said Sasha. "We can't do this." The creature takes out another stalactite and prepares to swing at them.

Suddenly, Darrel gets an idea. "You're right," he said. "We can't but you can. Because I believe in you." "How can you believe me? After everything I did to you guys?" Sasha asked. "I was such a jerk."

"Because I'm a wizard," replied Darrel. "And you're my inspiration, to be me." "He's right," said Anne. "You're fierce, you're brave, and most of all you never give up!" Anne gives her a thumbs up before her fist slams to the ground.

"And listen to what this wizard says," said Darrel. "A true soldier doesn't need armor to do what's right." He points his staff at her armor, giving her more motivation. "You're right guys," she said.

Sasha proceeds to get up back on her feet. "I'll never give up. Not today, not ever!" She takes her shoulder pad off, causing it to slam to the ground like it fell from the sky. "How heavy was that armor?" Sprig asked.

Sasha removes her boots to lighten her stance, and attacks the creature. The creature swings its club, causing Sasha to climb up on her enemy. She jumps high in the air and says, "Get CROAKED!" She swings her sword, slicing the creature in half, and causing it to explode.

The floor loses its glow, causing the gravitational pull to revert to normal. Soon after, a column appears behind Sasha. "You did it, Sash!" Marcy cheered. Anne gives her the third stone to charge. "Go ahead," said Anne. "The honor should be yours," said Darrel.

Sasha places the grey stone onto the column and her eyes lose her pink color. At the same time, the stone gains its pink shade. After the stone charged, more writing appeared on the ceiling. Darrel translates again, "Congrats brah! You finally know what it takes to go the distance. For what is strength without persistence."

Sasha places her stone in the box, then a pink beam shoots out. "This is it!" Marcy cried. "The last temple is about to be located." "One more temple to go," said Sasha.

However, the beam suddenly hits on Darrel's staff. This gave the humans a confused look. "Maybe the staff is the key to the final temple?" Marcy asked. Darrel waves his staff, causing the beam to follow it around wherever he points it.

As Darrel takes a closer inspection to the staff, he finds small inscriptions on the handle. Then, a bright red glow filled the ancient letters. The group surely was surprised at this, mostly Darrel. "No way," he said. "This is it!"

"What's it?" Anne asked. Darrel reads the inscription on the handle. "Knowledge, Heart, and Strength, together they're refined. But with Magic by their side, makes the three inclined. If a temple you seek, you'll seek to find, what's never really there, what's never been designed. Magic is important, a path you must commit. For if you don't believe, you will never find it."

"There is no temple on record, because there isn't a temple at all," said Darrel. "It's the Eternal Staff!" "No way," said Anne. "You mean we had the temple in our hands the whole time?!" Marcy exclaimed. "I gotta admit, I'm impressed," said Sasha.

"Go ahead, Darrel," said Anne as she gave him his stone. "This honor is yours." Darrel takes his stone and lifts it off the ground. He takes the staff in his hands and uses his powers to charge the final stone. The group was looking away from its bright light. So while they weren't looking, Darrel snatches the gem from the air and stops his magic from charging the stone.

"Did it work?" Sasha asked. Darrel reveals his stone with a shade of red again. "It's done," he said as he placed his stone back on the box. The music box has all their gems colored again.

"I guess that's that," said Anne. "Indeed," said Darrel. "We should open it at Wartwood, so we can say goodbye to everyone." "NO!" cried Marcy. "No, no, no. If we turn that thing on, who knows where we'll end up. We should bring it to King Andrias so he could tell us how to use it correctly to get home."

"Of course," said Sasha. "Trust Marcy to already have a plan." Sasha gives the box to Anne and she places it back in her bag. "Look at this," said Marcy. "The gang's back together again!" She wraps her arms around her three best friends and they all give smiles.

"Okay," said Darrel. "Let's get these frogs back to Wartwood and give them some water." The gang agrees and leaves the temple. Darrel lags a bit behind, because he was curious. 'Why was Marcy so keen on getting the box to King Andrias? And how is Sasha agreeing without hesitating?'

Outside the temple, Cronaxx and Tint were tending to Joe Sparrow and Frobo. They turn to see the gang back in one piece, and they have Sasha and Grime with them. They wave at Darrel, who waves back at them.

"Hey, Darrel, Anne," said Sasha. "Thanks for all that stuff back there, believing in me and junk." "Hey no problem," said Darrel. "I'm sorry for not trusting you earlier," said Anne. "Sasha, do you think, maybe we could start over? Do things right this time?"

"I'd like that," replied Sasha. "Sasha," said Darrel. "Since we're starting over, are you okay with me and Anne?" He goes over to hold Anne's hand, and seeing how happy they are, Sasha smiles. "Sure, I'm okay. I'm sorry I've been such a lousy girlfriend. You definitely deserve better, and Anne is better."

Darrel smiles, then pulls out something from his pocket. "You know, Sasha. Just because we're broken up, doesn't mean I don't care about you anymore." He shows her the old photo of him and her together, the same one he crumpled up in front of her at Toad Tower. "I kept this, to remind me how much you mean to me."

Sasha started to tear up and hugged Darrel. "You really are the best friend I could ever have," she said. "Okay, it's kinda weird seeing Sasha Waybright cry," said Darrel. "I'm just gonna go over to the salamanders before it gets weird."

The two girls laugh as he walks over to Tint and Cronaxx. "So did you charge the gem?" Tint asked. "I sure did," said Darrel. "And as a matter of fact, we found the last temple too." "Where?" Cronaxx asked. "The Eternal Staff," Darrel replied.

"So, you're all set to going home," said Tint. "Yeah, about that," said Darrel. His tone starts to sound gloomy and serious. "What's wrong Darrel?" Tint asked. "Something's wrong," replied Darrel. "What is it?" Cronaxx asked.

"I think Marcy and Sasha are planning something big. And it's going to happen in Newtopia. Marcy was insistent that we return the box to King Andrias. And Sasha agreed with Marcy's plan without any hesitation. Whatever King Andrias proposed to Marcy, she did find it interesting. And Sasha, well, I think it's only going to be a distraction

to what the king has in store. In the end, I think the King is planning something big, and we're all pawns in his game."

Cronaxx looks over to Frobo with that same edgy feeling he had when it first arrived. Then looks over to Darrel, who's eyes glowed red about halfway in his pupils. He nods, "You're right Darrel. We must be prepared for what comes next."

"Can't we stop it, Uncle?" Tint asked. "I'm afraid the wheels are already in motion," replied Cronaxx. "We've passed the point of no return. Even if we told them, it wouldn't matter what differences we'd make." Darrel nods, "Then let's enjoy the time we have left. Until it begins."

Dinner and a Show

Chapter 44 - Dinner and a Show

Things could not be more looking up for Anne, Darrel, Sasha, Marcy, the Plantars, the Salamanders, and Grime. They return to Wartwood from the third temple and have recharged all the stones. Now all that's left is for the group to return to Newtopia and give the box to King Andrias so that he could send them home properly.

To celebrate their victory in recharging the stones, Anne and the Plantars set up a dinner party for the whole gang. Sasha and Grime took shelter at Felicia's tea house, where she had rooms for rent at the time. Marcy took shelter in the fwagon, like before, but helped the Plantars set up for the evening.

Darrel and the Salamanders were in the basement, getting dolled up and ready. Darrel hears Anne and Marcy talk about Sasha and how she's willing to change. He looks down to the floor and frowns, knowing that Sasha is going to betray them somehow.

"Are you okay, Darrel?" Tint asked. "It's just hard," replied Darrel. "I can't ignore the obvious. Sasha and Grime are planning something, Marcy and the king are planning something. I feel like that the only person I can trust right now is Anne."

"Don't forget," said Cronaxx. "You can also trust yourself. In situations like this, that's how it should be." Darrel nodded, "Thanks Cronaxx." "Although," said Tint. "I am kinda on the fence that Anne would invite Grime over as well." "We have to respect Anne's choice," said Darrel. "That doesn't mean we don't have to like it though. I agree, Grime is one of those guys who could betray you."

"Amphibia has made me grow out of my comfort zone," said Darrel. "And my friends have changed so much. Some even show our true

nature." "That may be true," said Cronaxx. "But that isn't going to make time stand still. The dinner party is starting soon."

Later that day, with the group all dressed up, Darrel and the salamanders magically moved the furniture around for the entertainment part of the evening. Anne comes up in her Thai formal clothes, making Darrel blush lightly. "Wow," he said. "Anne, you look lovely." Anne blushes, "Thanks Darrel, you're not so bad yourself."

Then, a knock was heard on the front door. "That must be our guests," said Cronaxx. "Okay, now everyone please be cool?" Anne asked. "Remember, this isn't the same Sasha who tried to kill you and take over Amphibia."

The Plantars and the salamanders agreed. Anne opens the door to reveal Grime and Sasha ready for the evening. The Plantars cower at the sight of Grime's smile, but Anne persuades them to calm down.

Grime brings in a cart with a cover on top. "My sincere thanks to you all for the kind invitation," he said. "Your home is sufficient for habitation." He pushes the cart to the Plantars. "I baked a Vol-cake-no. It needs a little more time to rise, but it's sure to end the night with a devastating explosion." The group squirmed quietly until Grime said, "Of chocolatey goodness."

Hop pop goes to move the cart to an open area of the house and Darrel and Anne stand face to face with a stern Sasha. "Well gang," said Sasha. "Looks like, we're all finally back together again!"

Darrel smiles while the three girls cheer with glee. "Human friendships are loud," said Polly covering her ears. "Human friendships differ in many ways," said Darrel. "I have my own."

Out in the backyard, the group takes their seats at the table. Sprig sat next to Anne, annoying Sasha. She gestured for him to move, but Grime gestured for her to leave it as they were. They cleared at

each other's throats, until Hop pop asked, "Anyone care for a cough drop?"

Eventually Sasha gives in and takes a seat beside Polly. "Welp, enjoy everyone," said Hop pop. Everyone dines on Hop pop's grilled turnips. "It tastes so fresh," said Grime. "You must tell me which frogs you extort for produce."

"Actually, we planted them ourselves," said Cronaxx. "And they are frogs of course." "Oh, yes," said Grime. The gang sat in silence, while a cricket was chirping. "So," said Darrel. "Anyone want to hear a joke?" "Oh no," whispered Anne.

"What is the downside of eating a clock?" Darrel asked. Anne sighed in relief. "What?" Tint asked. "It's time consuming," replied Darrel. Everyone chuckled a bit, "That is so dumb," said Grime.

"I got one," said Hop pop. "How many toads does it take to screw in a mushroom light?" Darrel perked his eyes, getting the feeling that it may be offensive to Grime. "None! They prefer utter darkness and the smell of blood."

The group remained silent until, "Hahaha! Oh it's so true," said Grime. "Good one small frog!" The gang laughs it off, and continues feasting. "Gotta give it to Hop pop," said Polly. "He surely knows his way around the kitchen."

"Hey, Sash," said Marcy. "I can't get over your armor. It totally suits you." "I know right," said Sasha. "Way better than that dorky medieval school play we were in. Remember how I convinced you guys to skip rehearsal and hangout on the roof?" "And we had the loudest dance party?" Anne asked.

Darrel laughed, "Of course, how can I forget?" "Why did we stop doing stuff like that?" Sasha asked. "Well," said Marcy. "When we got caught, Anne took the blame and said it was her idea." Darrel suddenly stopped laughing. "That was not a good outcome," he said.

"I felt terrible for staying quiet." "My parents grounded me for a month," said Anne.

"But you weren't alone, Anne," The girls perked up when Darrel said that. "After you got punished, I told my parents about how I convinced you guys to do it. They grounded me for a week."

"Oh yeah," said Sasha. "I forgot about that." She slumps on the table feeling guilty. "Hey, it's in the past," said Anne. "We're all different people now." "She's right," said Darrel. "Say, who's up for a rousing game of Draws-a-Doodle?" Hop pop asked. Grime slammed his fists on the table with delight. "I love Draws-a Doodle!"

The gang gets inside and prepare for their game. They noticed that the cake blew a gust of wind under the cloth, but shrugged it off. Grime digs into a bowl and pulls out his subject on what to draw. He draws four weird misshapen figures that not even Darrel could guess.

"You know what this looks like?" Anne asked. "That pep rally where the band got trapped under the stage?" Sasha asked. "A certain ant queen and her hive," said Darrel. Sasha was surprised. "Ant Queen?" "It was back in Newtopia," said Darrel. "That was the first thing after-"

Hop pop jumped in the center and said, "Sergeant Campbell Bilgewater and the horsefly rebellion of '48!" "Yes," said Grime. "For a frog, you're actually pretty smart." "Age comes wisdom," said Cronaxx. "It doesn't matter if you're a frog, a toad, a salamander, or a newt."

"Okay, my turn," said Hop pop. Grime gives Hop pop the marker and he makes a drawing of a sad snake. Everyone starts guessing, then Sasha says, "A weeping dirt snake?"

"Hah," laughed Sprig. "That doesn't look anything like a dirt snake. Bad guess! Bad guess!" His funny outburst makes Sasha give off a

grouchy face. "'Weeping dirt snake' is right," said Hop pop. Now it was Sasha's turn to rub it in Sprig's face.

"Yeah! Yeah! Yeah! In your face, twerp!" Her sudden outburst and poking make Sprig shrink into the couch. Darrel stepped up and placed his hand on her shoulder. "Hey, hey, take it easy Sash," he said. "It's just a game."

"But he-" Darrel raised his hand before she could say anything else. "It's your turn, just shrug it off and go." Sasha sighs, "Whatever." She goes up and draws her image. Darrel squints his eyes and tries to see a more basic structure.

"Oh, it's toad tower exploding," said Polly. "When Darrel caused that giant storm and nearly crippled the Toad army? Come on, you guys were there." Polly's guess made Grime growl. Darrel grew nervous at Polly's remark. "I don't think it's Toad Tower," said Cronaxx. "I think it's something more basic."

"No, I think it is," said Hop pop. "That's the top of Toad Tower where Anne chose us. Where Darrel broke up with Sasha right in front of everyone." Sasha started to growl from that memory, making Darrel sweat a drop.

To avoid any conflicts, Darrel spoke out of impulse, "Is it a tree?" Sasha lost her anger at that moment. "Yes it is," said Sasha. "Good guess Darrel." Darrel smiled in relief. So did Tint and Cronaxx.

"Alright, my turn." He takes the marker from Sasha and takes out a slip of paper that says one word, 'Family.' Darrel took a deep breath and drew five human figures. The amphibians look carefully and try to guess.

But for Anne, Sasha, and Marcy, they tied. "Is that a Father?" "A Mother?" "Siblings?" Darrel continues to draw more details on the bigger drawings. Giving the second one a cane. "A Grandmother?" Sasha guessed. "A band of humans?" Marcy guessed. Anne stood up, but just as she did, Grime's cake did as well.

"Is it your family?" Anne guessed. Darrel points to Anne, and then turns his attention to the cake. "Uh, Grime? Is that supposed to happen?"

The cake rises to the ceiling of the living room then rips off the roof of the house, scaring everyone except Grime. "Ooh, desert! Yummy!" The cake then spewed a lava type substance and spread all over the floor. Furniture burned up on contact.

"I like hot chocolate," said Anne. "But this is ridiculous." "Was this your plan all along?" Hop pop asked Grime. "Pretend to be nice to get into our home and blow it up?!" "It's revenge for Toad Tower!" Sprig cried.

"Sprig! Hop pop! Stop!" Tint cried. "Grime, is this a traditional Toad dessert?" "Indeed," said Grime. "The Vol-cake-no is a toad favorite. Every feast ends with a delicious dessert battle!"

"Battle?" Darrel asked. "Frogs don't battle!" Then, the ground started to shake and the lava substance stopped spewing from the cake. "Don't worry," said Grime. "It's delicious, assuming you survive the hornets."

"HORNETS!?" Darrel cried. Right on cue, hornets pop out of the cake like flies. Darrel's fears started to kick in, freezing him in place. "They're the best part," said Grime. "But beware, their stingers cause-" One of the hornets shoots a stinger right into Grime's butt. "-paralysis."

Grime falls flat on his face and the group scream. "What do we do?" Marcy asked. "We'll just have to fight them," said Sasha. As a hornet comes in to sting Sasha, she takes out a hidden dagger in her ponytail. But as she strikes the hornet, it fails to make a dent.

"Anne, you got a plan?" Darrel asked. "Of course," replied Anne. "Keep your staff in hand. Marcy, you have your crossbow?" Marcy reveals her crossbow from her dress sleeve. "Yep," Then, Marcy

realizes what Anne's plan is when she takes the stinger out of Grime's butt.

"If we can't pierce their shells, maybe their stingers can." She shoots a stinger at one of the hornets, making it fall into the lava below.

"Hey that actually worked," said Sasha. "Okay," said Anne. "Darrel, Sasha, I need you guys to get their attention. Get them mad at you."

Darrel and Sasha smile at each other, "That, we can do," said Sasha. "Come on, Darrel! Give it all you got!" "Just like old times," said Darrel. "Set 'em up, Sasha!" Darrel levitates Sasha so she can hit the hornets. Then, the hornets shoot their stingers at her. She deflects them to Marcy and she shoots the rest of the hornets into the lava.

After they defeat the hornets the lava hardens into chocolate. "Whoo hoo!" Darrel cried. "Teamwork, Sash!" He offers her a fist bump and she gladly accepts it. Marcy hugs her friends, "That sure was ding dang teamwork, guys!"

Sasha looks to the ground, "Anne, Darrel, I want to apologize for almost losing my cool earlier today. I understand you guys want me to change who I am. But I don't know if I can. I like who I am."

Darrel smiles, "We're not asking for you to change, Sash. We want you to understand that we've changed. And possibly for the better. I don't want you to change Sasha. Wanting to be someone else, is a waste of who you are."

"Whatever happened to that shy little boy who needed someone to back him up from time to time?" Sasha asked. Darrel points to his heart, "He's still here. He just started finding the courage to fight his own battles."

Anne goes over to hold his hand. "So how about it Sash?" she asked. "Think this whole thing can work?" "I think we can give it a shot," replied Sasha. "Thanks, Sash," said Darrel. The three hugged it out while the rest of the group watched.

Grime gets back on his feet as the paralysis wears off from his system. "Aw, I missed the whole battle?" he asked. "So what happens now?" Cronaxx asked. Grime pierces the chocolate covered hornet and says, "Dessert!" The group gathers around to try the fallen insect.

The very next day, the group met up at town square to hear the announcement from Mayor Toadstool. "Simmer down everyone, simmer down," he announced. "Now I know we're all a little on edge since Sasha and Captain Grime came to stay in Wartwood."

The crowd turned to them with unease and furious looks. "Why?" Sasha asked. "Because we invaded the town?" "It was just one time," said Grime.

"Point is, we could all use some levity," said Toadstool. "So let's consult the wheel of fun." Toadie brings up the wheel of fun and Toadstool spins the wheel. The crowd cheers, hoping whatever lands will be their fun event.

The wheel slows down to land on an event called 'Battle of the Bands.' "Alright everyone," said Toadstool. "Get your teams together and start rehearsing. Wartwood is having a Battle of the Bands!"

The crowd cheers and Darrel's eyes glimmer with excitement. "You guys think Wartwood is ready for a Sasha and the Sharps reunion?" Anne asked. "How can I say no to that?" Darrel responded.

"The what and the who?" Sprig asked. "It was a garage band the four of us had back home," said Marcy. "We used to slay at talent shows," said Sasha with a dramatic flare. "Why is everything you say so agro?" Hop pop asked.

"Hopediah, Sprig, Tint, Cronaxx," said Wally. "You guys want to join me and Loggle's jug band?" The four agree without hesitation and join the two.

"Come on guys," said Anne. "We can practice in the basement." The humans take Polly and head off. Except for Sasha who stuck around a bit to talk with Grime. "Hey Grimsey, I'm going to go rehearse with the gang. You alright going solo?" Grime nodded, "Oh yes, all shall tremble before my performance."

Back at the Plantar farm, the humans were tuning their musical instruments. Marcy was on the drums, Sasha and Anne were on guitars, and Darrel was on the xylophone. Usually he would play the electric keyboard, but Amphibia lacked his specific instrument.

"It's kinda cool how you practice on different instruments on such an occasion, Darrel," said Marcy. "What can I say? Music is a good hobby," said Darrel.

"So, what have you got there Sash?" Anne asked. Sasha places a case on the floor, and opens it to reveal an axe beetle she got from Toad Tower. The group was amazed by the look. "Check this out," said Sasha. She places a crystal on an input slot and plays a wicked rift.

The rest of the group follows in on her rift, playing their instruments in harmony. That is until Marcy loses grip on her drum sticks. The gang laughs after that little fluke. "What a blast," said Darrel. "I missed this so much."

"Sasha and the Sharps are back baby!" said Anne. "So, what song should we play at the battle?" Marcy asked. "We should definitely play my song Heart stomper," said Sasha. "It was always a hit back home."

"We could," said Darrel. "But we should at least try something new. What do you think, Marcy? Anne?" Marcy looked to Anne to see if she was on board. "Actually, I wrote a song about Amphibia," said Anne. "And I was wondering if we could play it together."

Darrel perked with excitement. "A new song? I'm in." He looks to Sasha and Marcy. "We should at least try it." "You didn't tell me you

were writing a song," said Marcy. "We should try it."

"Is it okay with you Sasha?" Sasha looks to them with a unamused look on her face. "Look, Sash," said Darrel. "If it doesn't work out, we'll do your song. Okay?" Sasha smiles a bit, "For sure. Teach it to us Anne."

The group practiced their new song with Frobo on mist and Polly on lights. Darrel had his eyes shut when the girls sang the song along with him. He felt so alive when he played the xylophone. "And after that," said Anne as she gets her notes out. "Darrel can project all the adventures we had on Amphibia to show the crowd. And here's where Sasha plays a killer guitar solo. We sing the refrain one more time, and then we're done."

"Sounds wonderful, Anne," said Darrel. "Nice work, Anna Banana," said Marcy. "Fun to play too." Anne turns her attention to Sasha. "Sasha, what do you think?" "It's good," replied Sasha. "I just have a few tiny notes that could make it even better."

'Uh oh,' thought Darrel. 'Here we go again.' Sasha takes Anne's notes and turns her little suggestions into big changes. "These lyrics are all over the place tonally. They'll have to change." She flips the page and sees her and the others in bug suits. "Are these bug suits?"

She crosses them off, rejecting her fashion design. She takes Marcy's drums, claiming it as trimming them down. Sasha gives Polly more glowing mushrooms, claiming more light. Then turns to Frobo saying that he needs more fog, but not less either, making his response confused.

"Okay, Sasha," said Darrel. "I appreciate your notes, and the fact that it does sound simpler. But, it just doesn't feel like Anne's song anymore." "He's right Sasha," said Anne. "The lyrics are different, the melodies are different, it's just different."

"That's called collaboration, guys," said Sasha. "Then why does it feel like a hostile takeover?" Darrel asked. "Doesn't anyone get a say in this?" Both Darrel and Sasha squint their eyes, challenging their points of view.

Sasha sighed, "Once again, I am forcing you guys into doing things my way. You know what? Maybe I should just leave and join another band." With that, Sasha packed up her guitar and headed out.

"No, Sasha, it'll be more fun if you're here with us," said Anne. "I don't want to fight or argue with you," said Darrel. "I just want all of us to have fun."

"Listen, if I leave, you guys can have all the fun you want. I can have all the control I want. And we can all get what we want." "Well, I guess that makes sense," said Anne. "Yeah," said Sasha. "And don't worry, I'll still be rooting for you guys. This is just how I go sometimes. I'll see you tonight."

And just like that, Sasha takes off, leaving Anne, Marcy, and Darrel stumped. "So much for Sasha and the Sharps," said Anne. "Who's going to do the guitar solo now?" "I'm sure we'll be fine," said Marcy. "Probably."

"You guys done mopping?" Polly asked. "Cause Frobs and I charge by the hour." Frobo changes his pupils to a cents sign, signaling their payment. "Yeah, here," said Darrel. He gives Polly a small sack of coppers.

Later that day, Darrel takes some time to himself near Bessie's stable. Before he could rehearse anymore, he wanted to take possibly one last look around the farm. He looks at Clipper's old pen and remembers his first flight.

He enters the pen and takes a knee at the spot where he slept. "Clipper," he said. "Boy, I'm sorry you couldn't come home. But you are where your heart tells you. That's home, right? I'll see you again one day. But for now, Anne and our friends are about to participate in

a talent show. So, I gotta be there for them." He took one look to the skies and said, "Goodbye, my friend."

He takes a batch of milkweed from his pocket, the same batch that he and Clipper interacted with, and places it on his sleeping spot. Then, Darrel looks to the side and spots some of Clipper's scales and skin. He thinks back to Anne's costume designs and decides to come up with modifications of his own.

That night, the talent show arrived on schedule. The contestants partook in the talent show. Some of them were pleased, others fell flat on their faces. Cronaxx, Tint, Hop pop, Sprig, Wally, and Loggle had a blast with their jug band.

Soon it was Sasha and the Sharps' turn. Darrel arrived on time with his costume all ready. He is dressed up with dark red fingerless gloves with two strip holes in the back of each hand. Attached to the gloves are Clipper's old dragonfly scales. He has also crafted dragonfly boots with some of Clipper's shedded feet.

His outfit overall consists of dragonfly scales, an extra pair of jeans, a cape designed to look like dragonfly wings. His head gear consists of crafted dragonfly goggles, and a headband with dragonfly antennas. His face is painted across with a light blue lightning bolt, like David Bowie.

He waits backstage for Anne and Marcy to arrive. "Darrel, over here!" Anne cried. He turns around to find Anne and Marcy in their insect costumes. "Hey guys," said Darrel. "I was worried I'd go on without you guys."

Anne gazed at Darrel's dragonfly costume. "Wow, Darrel. You look great," she said. "Thanks," said Darrel. "I designed this costume to make myself look like Clipper." "I can definitely see the resemblance," said Marcy.

"I think Clipper would really like your idea of dressing up like him for this moment," said Anne. "I think so too," said Darrel. He walks up to

Anne and places an arm around her. "But you know what? I bet if he found a mate, she would be as beautiful as you."

"Aww, Darrel stop it," blushed Anne. "Hey guys, we're up next," said Marcy. "Let's go." The three arrive with their instruments and find Sasha with Toadie behind her.

"Hey Sasha," said Anne. Sasha turns to see her friends all ready for their performance. "Oh hey guys," she said. "Those costumes are something else." "I'm a Drag-Anne-fly," said Anne. "And so am I," said Darrel. "Just a little commemoration for my friend Clipper." "And I'm the personification of metamorphosis," said Marcy. "Moth," said Darrel. "She's a moth."

"Cool," said Sasha. "Well have fun out there," Marcy rolled her drums out on stage and Anne and Darrel followed. While the two got their instruments set up, Darrel tried to talk to Sasha one more time.

"You know, it's more fun if you joined us," he said. "But you guys clearly didn't want me in control," said Sasha. "I was only doing that to help us all succeed. I just wanted to be a good friend. Why couldn't you guys see that?"

Darrel smiled, "Take it from someone who followed you every step of the way. No matter how badly you want us to succeed, you can't force it." "He's right," said Toadie, looking at Mayor Toadstool. "Sometimes being a good friend, just means being there for them when they need it the most." "Keep that in mind Sasha," said Darrel as he goes out on stage.

"Ladies and Gentle-Frogs," announced Toadstool. "I give you the Sharps!" The crowd applauded as the spotlights hit on Anne, Marcy, and Darrel. Frobo activates his fog hands and the three begin to play.

(No Big Deal - Anne Boonchuy, Sasha Waybright, Marcy Wu, Darrel Loyallitat)

Anne : Took a leap through a box super weird to a swamp where frogs talk.

Marcy and Darrel : Ooh

Anne : Now I'm stuck, got no plans just my luck I'll do the best that I can.

Marcy and Darrel : Ooh

Anne : Making friends and enemies, it's weird but hey it's grown on me!

Marcy and Darrel : Ooh

Anne, Marcy, and Darrel: Bugs, Frogs, Newts, and Toads! Gonna' be a bumpy road!

Salamanders, bugs for lunch

Anne: I think I actually love this swamp!

Anne, Marcy & Darrel : It's no big deal, yeah no big deal!

Find a way to start again, brush off the dirt and make some friends!

It's no big deal, yeah no big deal!

I feel at home in a place that shouldn't be real.

Crazy strange but it's no big deal.

Mayor Toadstool : Well, it's certainly charming, I just hope there's a very cool guitar solo about to drop.

Anne: Here goes...

Sasha comes on stage and joins.

Darrel smiles and projects their adventures in Amphibia.

All: Ooooooh!

It's no big deal, yeah no big deal!

I feel at home in a place that shouldn't be real.

Anne: Killer birds...

All: But it's no big deal!

Sasha: Riding snails...

All: but it's no big deal!

Marcy: Eating flies...

All: But it's no big deal!

Darrel: Spells and charms...

All: But it's no big deal!

Anne : Finally me and it's no big deal.

They finished the song with what they wanted to do together. The crowd cheered with delight and even got a score of sixteen from Toadstool and Duckweed.

"Sasha that was amazing," said Anne as she gave her a high five. "You really slayed it out there with the solo," said Darrel. "We're so psyched you joined us," said Marcy. "Me too," said Sasha. "I'm sorry I took so long." "It's okay," said Darrel. "You pretty much made it up already."

And now, there was one final act of the night, Captain Grime. He comes out with a dark case, but reveals it to contain a beautiful harp.

Everyone, even Sasha, was surprised. "This piece is dedicated to the serenity of nature," said Grime.

Grime played away on his harp, stunning all the citizens of Wartwood. For the next three hours, he drove everyone in tears. Followed by cheers and a perfect score from the judges. Grime celebrated in triumph.

"Sorry we lost Sasha," said Marcy. "You know," said Sasha. "As much as it pains me to lose, it was worth it to have so much fun with you guys out there." "Me too," said Darrel. "But I gotta admit, I did not expect a professional from Grime there."

With the contest over, Toadstool gets the people's attention again. "Alright folks, gather around. I got one more announcement." Everyone gathers around like Toadstool said. "Now as I understand it, you four kids will be leaving us soon."

"Yep," said Anne. "With the box charged, we'll be heading for Newtopia tomorrow for the king to send us home. Everyone, you've all done so much for me, and I'll miss you more than you could ever know."

The crowd stood with emotional faces, some with tears, but most with smiles. Anne and her friends may have caused trouble in Wartwood, but deep down, they will miss her most of all. The town proved that they accepted her, but now are heartbroken to see her go.

"Hey, before we go," said Anne. "Can we take a group photo?" "Heck yeah," said Toadstool. "Everybody line up!"

Sprig places Anne's phone on the stand while the whole town sits in place. "Sprig, Come on!" Anne cried. "This is a moment no one should forget," said Darrel. Sprig gets in front of the humans, and the camera goes off.

"Hey Grime," said Darrel. "That was some amazing playing you did on the harp." "Why thank you," said Grime. "Tell me," said Darrel. "Have you ever played guitar before?" "I don't think I have," replied Grime.

Darrel smiles and takes out his makeshift guitar. "Here's your first look at guitar playing." Darrel plays a few notes, getting the group's attention. Even some of the townsfolk.

(Future Days - Joel Miller LoU2)

Darrel:

If I ever were to lose you

I'd surely lose myself

Everything I have found here

I've not found by myself

Try and sometimes you'll succeed

To make this man of me

All of my stolen missing parts

I've no need for anymore

I believe

And I believe 'cause I can see

Our future days

Days of you and me

The crowd listened to his song. Some cried, some yawned and went home tired. But the group stayed listening to his song. Anne rested

her head on his shoulder, swooning to his singing voice. Marcy and Sasha smiled with how much Darrel has gotten bold in a strange new world.

That night while everyone was asleep, Cronaxx started tossing and turning. He started feeling uncomfortable for some strange reason. He finds himself in eternal darkness. He continued walking until he started hearing voices. "I did not agree to this." "You don't walk away from me!" "Destroy them all!"

He runs to hear the voices, only to be blocked by dark figures with lights coming from their eyes. One figure towers him and picks him up. "You think they don't know," said the figure in a familiar voice. "Eventually you will tell them." He throws Cronaxx to the ground, slamming him on the floor.

Cronaxx wakes up at that very instant, breathing heavily. "Okay," he whispered. "The box, the old village, the ruins of disaster, the robot, and the king. I did something in the past. Something I wasn't proud of. Whatever it was, I hope I can remember. So that it never happens again."

Oh boy, Cronaxx is seriously trying to remember what he couldn't long ago. Whatever it was, let's hope he can remember his past before they return to Newtopia. After all, there's only one chapter left until the beginning of Season 3. I promise you guys, the next chapter is going to be very dramatic. And to those who saw the season finale: be prepared to feel hurt again.

True Colors

Chapter 45 - True Colors

In the town of Wartwood, everyone was going about their business. But business was much quieter than usual. That's because their visitors from another world have left the town early this morning. After the events of the talent show, everyone was sad to see Anne, Darrel, Sasha, and Marcy return home. However, they were glad to have met them till the end.

Anne, Darrel, Sasha, Marcy, and their amphibious friends traveled back to Newtopia, via Joe Sparrow and Carpet. Both flying companions were giving it all they've got, because they were carrying a lot of passengers.

Along the way, Cronaxx was rubbing his temple. "Uncle, are you sure you're okay?" Tint asked. "I'm okay, Tint," said Cronaxx. "I've just had a rough night last night. I don't know why, but I'm trying to remember my past." Darrel smiled, "Well don't try too hard. There's plenty of time to regain your memories when we get home."

"Newtopia, Ho!" Marcy cried. The gang look ahead and see the Gates of Newtopia again. Darrel smiles with excitement, knowing he's very close to returning home. 'I'm almost there, Mom,' thought Darrel. Suddenly, Joe Sparrow and Carpet started to shake and fall from the sky.

The gang splash into the water outside the gates. Frobo lifts up the group with his strength. "For Joe's sake, no one else is allowed to join our party," said Marcy. "Hey Darrel," said Tint. "Carpet is not responding." Darrel inspected the carpet and shrugged, "Looks like his enchantment has worn off. It's okay buddy, he did all he could. But now there's no need for him anymore."

The gang climb off Joe Sparrow and group up at the gates. "Okay guys," said Marcy. "Let's go over the plan one more time: First, I'm going to get us into the city. Anne's got the music box ready to give to King Andrias. And finally, Sasha and Grime, hoods up til after we give the king the music box. Once I tell him how much you helped us he'll clear you for sure."

Sasha and Grime put their hoods up with smirks on their faces, "Copy that," "Will do." Darrel takes one quick worried glance at Sasha, knowing that her plan will start once she's inside the gates. He wants to stop her, but he feels something much bigger going on.

The gang approaches the gates and the gatekeeper spots them. "Marcy Wu, and crew, reporting to King Andrias," said Marcy. "The gatekeeper opens the gates, and the gang enter the streets of Newtopia again.

"What an amazing adventure," said Marcy. "Almost makes you wish it could last forever, huh?" "Not sure I'd go that far," said Anne. "But yeah, it was pretty cool." "What about you Darrel?" Marcy asked. "It would be nice," said Darrel. "But all great stories must have an ending. No matter how badly you want to continue."

The two look at the Plantars and the Salamanders with smiles on their faces, remembering how grateful they were when they first found them. Polly suddenly started twitching and scratching her behind. "Polly, are you okay?" Sprig asked. "My butt is so itchy," replied Polly.

Tint and Cronaxx smiled, both knowing what was going to happen. "Should we tell them Uncle?" Tint asked. Cronaxx shook his head, "Maybe when they come out. I'd like to see their faces hands down."

"I can't believe we did it," said Sprig. "After all our adventures, this is the end." Sprig starts to sulk until Anne reaches his side. "Woah," she said. "Just because the adventure's over doesn't mean we can't see each other."

Darrel smiled, "Anne's probably right. Now that we know how the box works, we can use it to visit any time we'd like." Tint and Sprig smiled. "You guys can even visit me in my world," said Anne. "Wow, I never thought of that," said Tint. "That'd be awesome," said Sprig.

The group continue walking through the streets and reach the center of Newtopia. The guards open the doors to the throne room, and the group walk in. Waiting for them was King Andrias and Lady Olivia. Darrel bowed to the king, "It's a pleasure to see you again, your majesty." "My friends," said King Andrias. "Wonderful to see you! I trust you were successful?"

Anne takes out the calamity box with all four gems charged again. "Boom baby!" King Andrias was most pleased, "The charged music box. Well done! Well Done!" Darrel's smile quietly changes into a frown, and prepares for what could happen next.

"Now let's finally send you kids home," said King Andrias. Anne was just about to give King Andrias the music box. But then, Captain Grime shot his tongue and grabbed the box and gave it to Sasha. Darrel gives off an upset look, "You sure you want to do this Sasha?"

Sasha removes her hood, revealing herself to the King and the Newtopian guard. "It's what I do best," she replied. "Taking control. Now Grime!" Grime reveals himself, and slams down a hammer shaking the room. Most of the group fell to the ground, including King Andrias.

A couple of knights tried to stop them, but they were overpowered. "What the heck is going on here?" Hop pop asked. "I'll tell you what's going on," said Cronaxx. "Grime and Sasha are planning an invasion on Newtopia."

"Cut it out you guys!" Anne exclaimed. Suddenly, the group hears a roar coming from King Andrias. He charges at Captain Grime, pushing him against the wall. Tint was both impressed and scared at the same time.

"Stop!" Sasha cried. She is seen outside the balcony holding the box over the edge. "Not another move," she warned. "Or I smash it to pieces!"

"NO!" Marcy and Anne cried. "Sasha! I won't let you stand in my way of getting home," said Darrel. "You'd better listen to your friend there, that's your only way back," said King Andrias.

"Maybe I don't want to go home and rule the school," said Sasha. "Maybe I want to stay here, and rule the kingdom." She looks at Darrel and remembers his wizard skills. "But I must say, I'm surprised Darrel," she said "You should've known I would do something like this."

Anne, Marcy, and King Andrias look at him with surprised faces. "You're lying," said King Andrias. "No, she's right," said Darrel. "Fool me once, shame on you. But fool me twice, shame on me."

"You knew she was going to betray us!? And you let this happen?" Anne asked. Darrel took a deep breath. "I had to," said Darrel. "And I'm grateful you did," said Sasha.

Just then, Captain Grime swings his hammer on King Andrias' ankle, causing him to kneel. "King Andiras!" cried Marcy. "Both of you stop this!" Anne cried.

"Stop!? But we're just getting started," said Grime. He bellows his Toad call on the balcony, revealing hidden toad soldiers that snuck into Newtopia. The warning bells rang as the crowd began scattering all over the city.

"Soldiers of Newtopia!" Grime called. He shows the Newtopian army his hammer and climbs onto King Andrias' back. "Put down your arms this instant, or the next thing I smash will be your king's head!" The newts surrender and the toads capture them.

"Excellent," said Grime. "Open the Gates!" The toads at the front gates do what they are told and open the gates of Newtopia. Then

they block the doors with door stops to keep them opened.

The toads escort King Andrias back into the throne room. "So you think you've won, do you?" King Andrias asked. "Sure do," said Grime. "And if you think things are bad now, in a couple of hours the rest of our army will be at your doorstep."

Darrel looks out to the valleys beyond the gates and spots the rest of the toad army marching their way to the gates of Newtopia. "This is only going to end one way," whispered Tint. "I know," replied Darrel.

"Take him to the dungeon," said Grime. "And find him an extra large cell." The toads obey his command and take King Andrias away. "You'll never get away with this!" he bellowed. He nods secretly to Marcy, and Marcy nods back.

Grime and Sasha take their places at the feet of the throne. "Well frogs," said Grime. "Say hello to the new rulers of Amphibia. Pretty hot right?" "I will say no such thing," said Cronaxx.

"Sorry things got a little crazy back there," said Sasha. "You guys good?" "No," replied Darrel. "Are you serious?!" Anne cried. "Sheesh, don't be sore losers," said Sasha as she sat down on her throne. "Look I'm gonna stay here and get this Toad regime off the ground. But I can totally send you three home if you want. Or you could stick around and give me a hand. What do you say?"

"What do I say?" Anne asked. "After everything you've done? I say that you're clearly insane, if you think I'm going to let you bully me and everyone else just to get what you want!" Anne was clearly on the no factor of Sasha's offer. So she turned to Darrel. "How about you Darrel? You in?"

"You may as well send me home," said Darrel. "Because I told you before, I wanted no part of what you're doing." "Oh please," said Sasha. "You and your salamander friends allowed me to invade Newtopia with ease. You could've stopped me from the moment things were going my way."

"Even if I didn't want you to, your plan is nothing more than a distraction," said Darrel. "Why did you think I let you invade Newtopia? Something big is going on. And one way or another, we're going to find out what it is!"

And of course Sasha wouldn't listen, "Look guys, I know you're upset right now. But-" "No!" Anne cried. "I'm done listening to you! I'm done trusting you! You're a horrible person, and I'm done being friends with you!" Sasha perked up with Anne's statement. She looks over to Darrel for a last support attempt. Darrel shook his head, "Magic lesson number 8: Control is an illusion."

Sasha frowns in hurt and disgust. The Plantars and the salamanders kept quiet after what they said. Marcy tries to calm Anne down. "You don't mean that Anne," she said, "We can still fix this."

"I'm sorry Marcy," said Darrel. "But this is something Sasha has to fix on her own." "Fine," said Sasha. "Well, since we're not friends. I guess I'll just send you guys home. And you can say 'goodbye' to your amphibian families forever!"

Darrel clenched his fists, staff in hand and tested Sasha. "Try me." He gets in front of everyone and takes a wizard stance. "My box, my rules," said Sasha. "It was never your box. Nor was it ours," said Darrel. Anne ran over to the Plantars and hugged them tight. Darrel closes his eyes and prepares to return home, fighting his ex girlfriend.

"Sorry guys," said Sasha. "Say 'hi' to your parents for me." She opens the box and the group expects something to happen. However, nothing did. Darrel opens his eyes and finds himself and Anne still in Amphibia.

"I don't understand," said Darrel. Sasha tried to wind the box, but nothing worked either. "Well, that was embarrassing," she said. "Until I can figure out how to use this thing. Guards! Take them to the dungeon!"

The toads surround them, preparing to take them away. "Hold on!" Darrel shouted. He walks to Sasha, using magical barriers to prevent the toads from stopping them. He takes out his photo of him and Sasha and gives it to her. "Take it," he said. "I still care about you. But if that means nothing to you, you can rip it up."

Darrel returns to the group and lowers the barriers, surrendering himself to the toads. "This isn't over Sasha!" Anne cried. "You hear me?! THIS ISN'T OVER!" The doors to the throne room close. Sasha looks at the photo that Darrel gave her. Realizing that she impacted on his life made her feel a tad guilty.

As the group made their way towards the dungeons, Anne started to fume with anger. "I can't believe I trusted her! She is such a jerk! I just wanna..." She started grunting, causing Darrel to pull back Tint and Sprig.

Anne cries in anger and headbutts one of the toads. Knocking two others to the ground. The toads stand guard preparing to take drastic measures. When all of a sudden, a mysterious newt crawls on the ceiling and attacks them.

With one swipe, the newt knocks them all down. "Woah," said Tint. "That was impressive." "Who the heck are you?" Hop pop asked. The newt chuckled, "I am General Yunan-" Knowing how boastful the newt is, Lady Olivia stopped her. "Her name is Yunan, she's very important, blah blah blah. We don't have time for this! Come on."

Lady Olivia opens a secret passage that leads them outside the castle. "This way everyone," she said. Everyone exits the castle and sneaks through the invaded streets of Newtopia. What was once a clean respectable city, turned into a mudhole of chaos, vandalism, and bullies.

They all take shelter at Sal's abandoned shop. Most of the group feel discouraged in light of what's going on. "The city's crawling with toads," said Sprig. "And there's still a whole army coming?" Hop pop

asked. "Yep," said Marcy. "It's a full on toad rebellion. But don't worry, I've got a simple plan to solve all of this."

She takes out her telescope and looks to the army. "The toad army is less than an hour away. We have to close the front gate before they get here. Otherwise we'll be overrun."

"Tint, Darrel, and I can cast a magic barrier at the entrance in case things go south," said Cronaxx. "Oh sure, now you want to stop them," said Anne in a sarcastic tone. "What's that supposed to mean?" Tint asked.

"You guys are wizards!" said Anne. "You were supposed to take them down before they could do anything." Anne turns her attention to Darrel. "And you. How could you not tell us?" Darrel took a deep breath and said, "I had to know what the toads were planning."

Anne still looks upset at Darrel, "I'm sorry I didn't tell you," he said. "But I didn't know she would bring that big of an army." Knowing that they have a common enemy, Anne couldn't hold a grudge with him.

"Hey guys," said Marcy. "If we're going to stop the army, we also need to free the king, defeat Sasha and Grime, work through our emotional baggage, and finally redesign the current political systems so that this uprising never happens again."

Saying all that in one breath, Marcy takes a break speaking. "Gee, is that it?" Hop pop asked. "Yeah, it ain't looking good," said Polly in a sad tone. Frobo gives off a sad expression as well. The rest of the gang followed suit.

Anne however, wasn't willing to give up so easily. "Come on, you guys. We can do this. They may think that we're just a weak little frog family, a clumsy nerd, an unstable wizard, a big metal baby, and a goofy pushover. But they have no idea who they're dealing with."

She turns to Lady Olivia and General Yunan, "Except for you guys. I'm sure they think very highly of you two." "They do," said Yunan.

"Just continue your speech," said Lady Olivia.

"We've been through alot together," Anne continued. "Cannibals, giant killer mobs, combining vegetables, you name it. And we're going to beat this too. Because when we're together, nothing can stand in our way. Now, who's ready to kick some toad butt?"

The group cheered at Anne's speech. And before she could gather everyone, she turns to Darrel. "Hey Darrel, I'm sorry I almost accused you of betraying us." "It's okay Anne," said Darrel. "I wasn't entirely sure of Sasha and Grime's plan. As a matter of fact, they boasted their victory too early."

"But I should've known you better," said Anne. She takes his hand and the two blush. "You are too kind to get involved in terrible situations." "Well we're all in this together right now," said Darrel. "Let's take a stand." "Okay guys," said Anne. The group gathers around to hear Anne's plan. "Here's how we're going to do it..."

Hop pop, Marcy, and Lady Olivia enter the dungeons to free King Andrias. Hop pop runs into the spotlight and gives a performance to the suspected toads. Lady Olivia had her doubts, but Hop pop wooed the audience and made them cry over his poetry. They sneak behind the toads and free the king.

Polly, General Yunan, and Frobo distracted the guards in the streets of Newtopia. Polly takes her small dagger and aims at the toads. Of course the toads laugh at her size, but then General Yunan and Frobo jump in to chase the guards.

Cronaxx and Tint make their way to the city gates and prepare to enchant a shield at the front door in case things go south. But the only way for that spell to work was that Darrel has to be on top channeling them from above.

At the same time, Sprig and Anne make their way to the top to close the gates. Darrel raises his staff and the shield activates, causing the

toads to bang at it. "We don't have much time," said Anne. "Let's shut this gate already," "Right," said Sprig.

The two work together to shut the gates, only to find the door stop blocking the door. "Tint! Cronaxx! You have to take care of the door stop!" Anne cried. "I'll draw the toads' attention," said Darrel.

The three wizards remove their spell and get to moving the blocks out of the way. They concentrated hard to levitate the heavy door stoppers. Thankfully, Polly, Yunan, and Frobo were there to assist them.

As Darrel returns from drawing the toads away, and Anne and Sprig close the gates, they spot Sasha landing on the tower. The three take a stance, ready to fight. Meanwhile, Grime appears below and swings his hammer at the concentrated Cronaxx. One slam to the head knocked the old Salamander to the ground.

"Uncle!" Tint cried. He snaps his fingers, causing Grime's cap to catch on fire. He jumps back up to avoid any more conflict with the fire Salamander. "You'll pay for this!" Tint cried. "Keep moving the door block, I gotta tend to my Uncle" Polly, Yunan and Frobo nodded in agreement and kept pulling.

At the top of the tower Sasha put her hands up. "Woah, I don't want to fight. See?" Anne and Darrel spot Grime climbing up the wall. "Grime may beg to differ," said Darrel. "Don't worry, I got him," said Sprig. He jumps down to face Grime head on.

The three humans stood on the tower with smoke and wind blowing in the air. The scene was intense like time stood still for them. Anne stood her ground strong. Darrel, however, was curious.

"Why don't you want to fight, Sasha? We're foiling your plans." "I need you to listen to me," said Sasha. "There is something wrong with this Andrias guy. We should-" "You expect me to believe you?!" Anne asked. Darrel raised his hand, "Hold on Anne, let's hear what she has to say."

Darrel puts his staff down, "What about King Andrias? What makes you think he's bad?" "I saw a tapestry on the wall," said Sasha. "Andrias looked like he was up to something." "Don't tell me you're buying this Darrel," said Anne. "Anne, we don't know the king very well," said Darrel.

"Too bad," said Anne. "She's out of chances." Anne goes to close the gates, and Darrel tries one more time to talk her out of it. "Anne! Ever since the temples I have had nightmares and visions of what's going on in Amphibia. Not only are we prolonging the inevitable, but I'm at least trying to figure out what's really going on here. Do whatever you want. But I can't be responsible for what happens next."

"So you won't stand in my way?" Sasha asked. Darrel shook his head, "I need to know who's the puppet master of this world. And why are they pulling the strings?" Darrel steps aside, leaving Anne vulnerable to Sasha's attacks.

"Anne, I can't let you close that gate." Sasha draws out two swords, fit for dual wielding. "Oh yeah," said Anne as she drew her sword. "Just try and stop me!"

Both girls have at it with their attacks. Darrel just stood there, staying out of their conflict. He never wanted any part of Anne's frustration with Sasha, and he wanted to know more about King Andrias.

As Anne goes in to lunge at Sasha, she grabs her arms and tries to talk. "Anne, please!" "Too late Sasha!" Anne cried as she kicked her off. The two kept at it, with Darrel very anxious about who comes out on top.

Sasha disarms Anne's sword and prepares for the fighting to end. However, Anne's quick agility gives her the upper hand. She slides down behind Sasha, lifts her cape and covers her face. She goes over to close the gate and the toads are locked out.

Darrel stood by Anne's side with a nervous look on his face. 'This is the point of no return,' he thought. They hear a conch being blown by the freed king and look below. "Royal Newt Guard, Assemble!" he cried. They watch the toads inside the gates being rounded up by the newts, Grime being defeated by Sprig, and Tint tending to his unconscious uncle.

"End of the line Sash!" Anne cried. Sasha looks to see the newts victorious. "Oh no," she said. "I know," said Darrel. "It has begun." He takes a deep breath and escorts Sasha down from the tower.

The group returns to the castle with most of the toads locked away in the dungeon. Sasha and Grime were hogtied but followed them in. Tint was still tending to Cronaxx. "Come on, Uncle," he said. "Wake up, we won."

Just then, Cronaxx started to wake up. At first he flickered his eyes, but then he shot them wide open. "Uncle! You're awake!" Tint cheered. "I am," said Cronaxx. "And I'm remembering." "Remembering what?" Tint asked. "I remember everything," replied Cronaxx.

"You remember your youth?" Tint asked. "My youth, my journeys, my-" Suddenly, Cronaxx turned his head seeing all the violence standing still. "Tint, who won?" "We did," said Tint. "The gates are locked and the toads are locked away."

"No," said Cronaxx. "Come on! We have to stop them now!" "Uncle, what's wrong?" Tint asked. "The kids are in danger! If he gets his hands on the box, we're all doomed," said Cronaxx. "He who?" Tint asked.

Inside the throne room, nearly everyone was relieved that the siege was over. Darrel was uneasy, so were Sasha and Grime. And Polly was still trying to scratch her strange itchy spot on her butt. "Polly, stop scratching your butt, the king's almost here," said Sprig.

King Andrias enters the throne room with Hop pop, Marcy, and Lady Olivia. Sprig and Polly hug their grandfather, while Marcy hugs Anne. King Andrias stands proudly over the group, prepared for what's next.

"Okay, let's do this," he said. Sasha tried one more time to stop them. "Anne! Please don't give it to him!" Yunan covers her mouth with her tail, "Silence!"

Just as Anne gives King Andrias the box, Tint and Cronaxx storm in. Cronaxx runs with all his might, "NOOO!" But it was too late. Anne gave him the box, Cronaxx fell on his face, and Darrel perked up his stance as he saw the old wizard scared for his life.

"Okay big guy, send us home," said Anne. "He can't have the box!" Cronaxx cried out. He tries to use his magic to pull the box to him. But the bump on his head made him lose focus.

"In good time, dear kids," said King Andrias. "But first, I'm going to let you in on a little secret." 'Uh oh,' thought Darrel. "There was a time when Newtopia was truly great. But that greatness was stolen from us."

King Andrias went deep into his story of Newtopia long ago. "Centuries of prosperity were brought to an end because of me. I was weak. Trusting those who said they were my friends. And because of that, the music box was taken under my watch. It cost us everything. And after a thousand years, no one even remembers our legacy. But now, at long last, the box is back. And with its power, Newtopia will return to glory!"

"Oh well that's nice," said Hop pop. Darrel gasped, "No it isn't. My visions, that voice in the first temple. It was you!" "What?" Anne asked. "King Andrias is the puppetmaster," replied Darrel. "He's evil!" The group gasped, except for Cronaxx and Tint.

Andrias laughed, "Indeed! For you see, my ancestors weren't frail explorers. They were glorious conquerors!" Andrias steps on a

hidden pad, and a column rises. He places the box on the column, activating the stones glow. The ground started to shake, the windows shattered bit by bit, and the castle began to glow.

Soon after, the castle began to rise from the ground revealing it to be a giant flying fortress. Sprig and Tint look below to see the castle floating. "Oh we are way high up," said Sprig. "This is some real Second Speculation type stuff here," said Darrel.

Then, the group finds what looks like rockets approaching the kingdom. They are revealed to be robot frogs, like Frobo. Except their armor was much darker, more buffer, with plasma cannons for arms, and red glowing eyes. 'Glowing red eyes,' thought Cronaxx. 'It's all coming back now.' The robots surrounded the group, all in shock and awe.

"I'm sorry Anne," said Andrias. "But I'm afraid you and your friends can't go home just yet. Wouldn't want you telling anyone about the coming invasion." "Invasion?" Darrel asked. "What?" Anne asked.

"Now that I have the box back, I can finish the work my ancestors started," said Andrias. "From this castle, I will not rule only this world. But all worlds!" Andrias laughed in triumph.

"No!" Anne cried. "You'll never get away with this!" "Anne's right!" Sasha cried. "We'll stop you!" "Stop me?!" Andrias taunted. "I can see a demonstration of my power is in order!"

He presses the hidden buttons on the box, causing his castle's symbol to turn into a weapon. "Behold!" he bellowed as he pressed the button causing his weapon to fire. The blast was fired directly at the newly constructed Toad Tower. When the blast made contact, the tower exploded, reducing it to nothing but ash.

The group gasped in horror, mostly Grime and Sasha. To see that much power destroy a building, who knows what Andrias would do with such a weapon. "Anne, Darrel, we have to stop him," said Sasha. "He's crazy!"

Darre looks down in defeat. "I can't fight these things," he said. "This kind of technology is impervious to magic. No matter how hard I try, I can't make a dent in these robots." Cronaxx and Tint look at him with despair.

"I don't believe this," said Anne. "We were so focused on each other, we couldn't see what was right in front of us."

"And the best part," said Andrias. "Was that even the wisest of you all couldn't see my true intentions." "What are you talking about?" Sasha asked. "I couldn't have obtained the most powerful tool of all time. Because without him, it wouldn't have existed. Why don't you tell them, my friend?"

Andrias points to Cronaxx who sulks his head in shame. Darrel was shocked, but most of the group was confused. "Cronaxx," said Darrel. "Is he saying...?" Cronaxx nodded, "It's true. I created the Calamity Box."

The group gasped, "But why?" Sprig asked. Cronaxx took a deep breath and began his story. "A wizard's journey takes them to the ends of the world. I was young, and eager to learn the ways of magic. My teacher showed me that endless possibilities exist in the endless stars of the night sky. As I grew older, my ambitions to explore new worlds grew. However, I couldn't figure out a way to travel outside our world. But then, I learned about the stones."

"The stones on the box?" Tint asked. Cronaxx nodded, "I needed help to obtain the stones, then I needed materials to make sure the magic of the stones is under control. That's when I went to the King of Newtopia: King Andrias."

"Indeed," said Andrias. "I told him of my plans of traveling to new worlds," said Cronaxx. "And he was most pleased that we had others join us. Including my brother, your grandfather, Cyrus Tormak."

Tint was shocked that his grandfather had a role in this too. "So the robots...?" Cronaxx nodded, "Were made by your grandfather. That's

why Frobo called you brother."

Cronaxx continued with his story. "Everything was going so well. Your grandfather designed the robots to withstand the traps designed to keep trespassers out while I recovered the stones. Some of us recorded the temples in our ancient history."

"The Ancient Order," whispered Anne. "And so, the box was created," said Cronaxx. "Thanks to the magic from me and other wizards, and crafters like Cyrus. My dreams were about to come true."

Then, Cronaxx frowned, "We showed the box to the king, and he was most pleased. Then one night, I heard constant arguing from the king and my brother. I couldn't see what was going on, but I heard every word. Cyrus stumbled onto Andiras' real plans. One thing led to another, and then things went too far. To hide the truth, the king made sure that Cyrus wouldn't tell anyone what he saw. I heard a sword being drawn. And then he..."

Cronaxx lowered his head in tears, "I realized that I made a mistake," he continued. "So I gathered my friends, who were friends of the king as well. And we decided that the best way to stop the king's true intentions was to hide all knowledge of the Calamity Box."

Andrias scowled at Cronaxx's story. "We stole the box and took it away from the kingdom," said Cronaxx. "I returned to my quarters and gathered all the records on how to make any more calamity boxes in case the original box broke. But as I crafted an exploding potion, I was ambushed by Cyrus' robots. Andrias turned my brother's work against me, and I had to make the ultimate sacrifice. I used my powers to include a memory loss charm to the potion. I slammed the potion to the ground causing my hut to explode and the crowd to scatter."

Cronaxx was almost done with his story, "I blacked out when I landed in the forest nearby. That explosion was how I got this scar." he points his scar to the group. "As I wandered the wilderness alone,

I was later found by your father. He took me in and I regained my short term memory. But the rest of my memories were gone from existence, until now."

The group was amazed with how Cronaxx came to be. But Andrias was not. "All you did was delay the inevitable," he said. "We could've ruled countless worlds together." "My intentions were to explore. Not conquer," said Cronaxx. "You used me and my friends to get what you wanted. I refused, because I knew I would lose myself."

"Well, now you've made your choice," said Andrias. "Hey kids," said Hop pop, "If we can get the music box back from him. Maybe we'll stand a fighting chance." "If that's what it takes," said Darrel as he drew his staff. "Right," said Anne as she drew her sword.

Andrias snapped his fingers, commanding the robots to aim their plasma cannons at them. The group prepares for a fight, but some are shocked by Andrias' command. Before they could fire, Marcy stood up in front of the king.

"STOP!" she shouted. "Andrias, this wasn't the plan. You said no one would get hurt." Andrias shrugged, "I would have said anything if it meant you delivered the box to me fully charged. Hate to break it to you kiddo, but you've been duped."

Marcy was stunned and hurt, but she was not alone. So were Sasha, Anne, and Darrel. "Mar Mar, what's he talking about?" Anne asked. "Yeah, what plan?" Sasha asked. Marcy turned around to try and explain. "He promised he'd take us with him," she said "To the new worlds th-that we could have amazing adventures, just like this one, forever and ever."

"But why?" Darrel asked, "Why indeed," replied Andrias. "Enough lies Mar Mar." Darrel was shocked. To hear that Marcy used a lie, started to get to him. "If you don't tell them the truth. I will," said Andrias. Darrel was most curious. Either he had to hear the truth from his best friend, or from the enemy she associated with. "You wouldn't," said Marcy.

Seeing that Marcy wasn't going to tell them soon, Darrel decided. "What is she not telling us, Andrias?" he asked. Marcy was shocked to hear him say that. Andrias came up to his throne and sat down.

"Did it ever occur to you Darrel, Anne, Sasha?" he asked. "That one of you knew more than they were letting on?" "That one of you, might have gotten you stranded in Amphibia? On purpose?"

Anne, Sasha, and Darrel gasped in realization. Marcy texted them the music box back home. She said it was Anne's birthday gift, but they didn't know what it was. Only Marcy did! Marcy was the reason they were stuck in Amphibia in the first place.

"You've got to be kidding me," said Sasha. "No, it can't be," said Anne. "What? What?!" Darrel cried. "Oops," said Andrias. "Looks like I spilled the tea, as you kids say. Hehehe."

"Marcy, tell me it's not true," said Darrel. "You knew?" "I did it for us," replied Marcy. At that moment, Anne, Sasha, and Darrel's shock turned into hurt and betrayal. "You KNEW!" Darrel's teeth grinned, showing how upset he is.

Marcy tried to explain why she did it. "The day we left, your birthday, they told me, my dad got a new job out of state. They're making me move away. They were going to tear us apart!"

"Marcy," said a hurt Anne. "I..I found the box, I had no idea it would actually work but it did!" Marcy cried. She tried to keep her friends together, "And-and it sent us to a place where we never have to grow apart. Where the four of us could be friends together forever!"

Sasha just swiped her tied hands away from her, frustrated with how things turned out. Darrel was hurt, on the verge of tears. And Anne still couldn't believe that another best friend would betray her.

"How could you?!" Anne exclaimed. "I've been missing my parents! My life!" "But, look at how much fun we've had," said Marcy. She was also on the verge of tears as well. "Look at how much you three

have grown. Look at Sprig. Look at Darrel. I gave you this! I gave you love! I gave you everything!"

"No," said Darrel. Sasha, Anne, and Marcy were scared hearing Darrel with a hurtful tone. "You didn't." Darrel walked up to Marcy, showing tears falling down from his face. "You took me away from my family. My mom. That's not okay. You think you're the only one going through bad situations?!"

Marcy tried to speak. "Darrel, what-" "MY MOM IS SICK MARCY!" he shouted. Marcy and Sasha were shocked to hear that Darrel, a kind shy hearted kid, was going through a rough patch in his life.

"She's terminally sick! Do you know what it's like?" he asked. "To wake up everyday and not know what's happening to your family?! To your MOM!? My mom was there for me when I needed it most! She gave me everything! Not you!" Darrel turned away from Marcy then looked back at her.

"All this time," he said. "I should've been there to help her. But instead, you dragged us here in some alternate world. Just so you could live out your ridiculous roleplaying fantasy, and not have to move away. If anything happens to my mom, and I wasn't there, I will never forgive myself! I hope you can live with that, Marcy! Because this is the most selfish thing you have ever done!"

Sasha walked up to Darrel, "Your mom is sick?" Darrel nodded, "I couldn't tell you guys. I didn't know how you would respond." Darrel walks away from Marcy, and Anne backs away from who she called her best friend.

Marcy couldn't help but watch them back up or walk away. She falls to her knees crying her heart out. "I just..didn't want to be alone," she said. "Well, I don't want my mom to be alone," said Darrel. "But look how that turned out."

Andrias couldn't help but smile at their expense. Especially Marcy's who's attempt to keep her friends together instantly pushed her

away. "Well I guess that's what you get for pouring your heart out to me over Flipwart," he said.

Still feeling hurt and betrayed, Anne looks to the Plantars, then Darrel and the Salamanders, then Sasha and Grime. Then, she turned to Andrias "The four of us may have made some mistakes," she said. "But you, you're evil!" "Here we go," said Andrias.

"And I'm going to stop you," said Anne. "Right here, right now!" She draws her sword, and Darrel, seeing her step up to the bigger threat, joins her. "Sasha!" Darrel cried. "Get ready." Sasha smiles, and quickly shows him their photo, "I've got your backs guys," she said. Anne slices her bindings, while Darrel burns Grime's off. "And I've got yours," he said.

Frobo gives them their weapons back, and Sasha gives Darrel one of her swords. "You'll need it," she said. "Thanks," said Darrel. Cronaxx, Tint, and the Plantars stood by their human friends. "We're with you Anne. Till the end," said Sprig.

"You guys are serious," said Andrias. "Okay," He draws out his weapon, a large fire plasma sword fit for a king his size. "Let's have some fun," he said. Sasha, Anne, and Darrel lead charge, slicing and dicing robots. Even though he was used to his staff, Darrel showed excellent skills with a sword.

Everyone fought hard against the king, even Marcy went to help her friends. They proved themselves to be strong against the robots, but Andrias wasn't pleased with their success. "ENOUGH!" He shouted. He slams his sword down, splitting up the group. Then, he goes after Polly, the youngest of the group.

"POLLY! NO!" Anne cried. Frobo comes to her rescue, holding the king in place. "Polly, I will save you," he said. "Oh look at that," said Andrias. "One of my robots. Must be defective." He slams his fist down, destroying Frobo and leaving his head with the group.

Polly was sad seeing her friend destroyed. "You Monster!" she cried. "Don't worry," said Andrias. "You're up next." "Andrias, No!" cried Darrel. "She's just a tadpole!" But Andrias wouldn't listen.

He slams his fist down, but soon discovers that she's not there anymore. "Over here you big bozo!" As the puff of smoke disappears, she reveals to the group her newly grown legs. Little stubby like her hands, but legs nonetheless.

"MY LITTLE BABY'S GOT LEGS!" Hop pop cheered with joy. "This is weird," said Sprig. "Polly," Sasha cried. "Get the box, Get the box!" Polly does so, using her legs with tremendous speed.

"Stop that little brat!" Andrias shouted. The robots try to shoot her with their plasma blasts, but Polly dodges them. She jumps onto the column and grabs the calamity box. "Got it!" But just as she removed the box, the castle began to power down and slowly descend to the ground.

The group cheered, but that victory was short lived. "Not so fast!" Andrias boomed. "You all got spunk, real chutzpah. But this ends now." He shows them Sprig and Tint in his grip, scaring the others. "Guys, don't listen to this bully," said Sprig. "We'll be fine."

"We'll see," said Andrias as he reaches them out the window. "Now put back the box, or these twerps learn how to fly." Darrel and Anne were horrified. "Darrel, Anne, don't," said Tint. Andrias tightens his grip, choking them.

"STOP!" Darrel cried. "STOP! PLEASE!" "Polly, do what he says," said Anne. Unable to lose her brother, Polly places the box back on the column. "Okay," said Darrel. "Now give them back. I'm begging you!"

Andrias looks to his hostages and smiles, "You've got what you wanted," said Anne. "Please put them down. They're our best friends. In this world, or any other world."

"That's the thing about friends isn't it?" Andrias asked. "The more you love them, the more it hurts when they go." He turns to Cronaxx, who is scared of what's about to happen. "Since you betrayed me Cronaxx, allow me to demonstrate. BY ENDING YOUR BLOODLINE!"

He drops Sprig and Tint out the window and the two fall. Darrel tried to use his magic, but it was too far to reach them. Hop pop, Polly, and Cronaxx were horrified. Anne and Darrel were shocked.

Suddenly, something triggered inside their hearts. All they could think about were the friends they bonded with in Amphibia. And they weren't about to lose them in an instant. With rage and hurt in their eyes, down on their knees. Anne's eyes started glowing blue. While Darrel's eyes glowed red. Darrel's rage cry bellowed through the halls

The two stones from the box started flickering again, and then their auras channeled within Darrel and Anne. Sasha, Marcy, and the others were surprised. King Andrias was shocked. He knew what was happening to them. "No, it can't be," he said.

While everyone was distracted, Marcy jumped out the window and called for Joe Sparrow. She flies through the sky to rescue Sprig and Tint from falling.

Back in the castle, Anne and Darrel were still glowing. "They're still connected to the stones," said Andrias. "But that's impossible!" "What's going on?" Hop pop asked. "I don't know," replied Grime. "Maybe it's a human thing!"

Anne and Darrel get up from their knees, as Anne's hair glows blue, and Darrel's hair glows red. Winds surrounding the two humans started picking up. "This is not a human thing," said Sasha. As a human herself, she knew that this was not her definition of normal, it was extraordinary.

Darrel tightens his grip on the Eternal staff, which causes the crystal to loosen from its handle. The crystal slightly levitates and gives off a powerful glow of light. The branches from his head turned into sharp horn like structures, his hat pointed up like a garden gnome.

"Give them back," said Anne in a demonic voice. Then it was Darrel's turn to speak. "Give THEM BAAAAAAAACKK!" As the two disappeared, the robots suddenly puffed into smoke. The group could not believe what was going on with their friends.

Cronaxx was excited, while Andrias was stunned. The two humans appeared and gave a punch and a blast at Andrias. They knocked off his crown in the process, making Cronaxx cheer. "What's happening to them, Cronaxx?" Hop pop asked. "They are still connected with the stones," said Cronaxx. "All is not lost."

Darrel and Anne fight Andrias with all their might. Slamming him down with the power of the stones. He tried to stop them with his shield, even roaring at his enemies. But Darrel's roar was so powerful that it shook the room and damaged the columns surrounding them. They break through Andrias' shield and he falls to his knees.

"Give them back," said Darrel. Suddenly, the two start to lose their strength and break connections with the stones. They fall, losing consciousness. Andrias takes this to his advantage, "Look like they can't control it." He takes his sword and approaches them.

Hop pop, Polly, and Cronaxx run to their aid. "Come on," said Hop pop. "Get up kids," "The stones took too much of their energy," said Cronaxx. "They need to save their strength." Darrel groans, making Cronaxx smile. "You truly are a wizard," he said. "Just like my nephew."

"Anne! Darrel!" Sprig and Tint cried out. Darrel and Anne barely wake up to see them running toward them. "Sprig! Tint! You're alive," said Anne. The four hug each other with delight. "Marcy caught us

just in time," said Tint. This statement surprised both Anne and Darrel.

However, their touching reunion was short lived by Andrias toppling over them. "I have to admit," he said. "Even I'm surprised. Somehow, you still got the gifts, kids. Which means, I can't let you live!" He takes his sword prepared to strike down on the family. Darrel tries to cast a shield, but with little strength, he isn't able to do it.

Suddenly, the castle began to power down again. Causing Cronaxx to fall back from the group. They turned around to find the box missing. But then, it was revealed that Marcy took it to try and open a portal home. "Please work, please work, please work." she begged.

"NO!" Andrias cried as he charged to Marcy. Sasha and Grime stop him in his tracks prepared to fight again. "Me and Grime will hold him," said Sasha. "Just go!" Darrel and Anne nodded. "We'll come back for you," said Darrel. "I Promise!"

Darrel, Anne, the Plantars, Tint, and Frobo's head make their way to the portal. "Quick into the portal everyone," said Marcy. "Hurry!" Cronaxx gets back up to see them make their way. But as he does, he spots Andrias overpowering Sasha and Grime. "THE BOX!" Andrias cried.

Cronaxx couldn't lose his nephew again, so he used his magic to race to the portal. Darrel, Anne, Tint, and the Plantars were about to cross. But Marcy was still on the other side. "Marcy, Cronaxx, Hurry!" Anne cried.

Marcy needed more time, "I just need to-" "LOOK OU-" Cronaxx jumped behind Marcy, with his hat fallen on the ground. Cronaxx and Marcy then felt a piercing coming from the region of their hearts. They look down to see that they've been both pierced by Andrias' sword. "No," whispered Cronaxx.

Andrias felt disappointed, "Now look what you've made me do, old friend," he said. The two wounded friends look up to the others. "I..I'm sorry," said Marcy. "For everything." "I'm sorry....my friends," said Cronaxx. "I tried....."

The guys could not believe what just happened. Marcy and Cronaxx have been stabbed by King Andrias. "MARCY!" Anne cried. "UNCLE!" Tint cried in tears. Darrel shouted, "NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!" Both Marcy and Cronaxx fell to the floor. Marcy dropped the box, then a bright light filled the room.

The gang wakes up from the bright light, still shaken up. Only to find themselves waking up on the hood of someone's car. That's right, a human car. Inside the car, a family was shocked, and took their picture. They turn around and find themselves in the middle of an active highway.

"Oh my frog," said Sprig. "What is this place?" Hop pop asked. An emotionless Darrel responded, "Los Angeles, California." "You know this place?" Tint asked. "How could I not?" Darrel responded. Anne only said one word to sum up where they are, "Home."

Wow! What an emotional rollercoaster this chapter has been. So many battles, so many secrets, so many betrayals. I'm grateful to have made it this far in the series and can't wait for the next season this coming October. I want to thank everyone who's been following my story for all the support. This summer's been crazy for me. But I wouldn't have it any other way.

The New Normal

Chapter 46 - The New Normal

Months of finding a way to return home, months of being apart from families, months of fighting amongst themselves. All have paid off. Darrel and Anne have officially returned to their home world. The two couldn't believe it with their own two eyes. They gazed in magnificence and shock, knowing that it's too good to be true.

However, their journey home came with a hefty price. For their journey was not over, it was just the beginning. Not only did they return home, but so did Tint and the Plantars. Now the shoe is on the other foot, because it's the amphibians that are stuck in this world and need to get back.

And not only that, Sasha is still stuck in Amphibia. She tried to fight off against Andrias with all her might, but it wasn't enough. And Marcy and Cronaxx.... Well, we know what happened. Darrel made a promise to come back for them, and one way or another he was going to keep it.

We continue our journey to the city of Los Angeles, California. Cars were gridlocked on the freeway, planes were flying, waving inflatable tube men were dancing in car dealerships. It was insanely confusing for the Plantars and Tint. "What the!?" "What is that thing!?" They've been asking.

"I don't believe it!" Anne cried. "I can't believe it," said Darrel. "We're Home!?" "This is your world, Darrel?" Tint asked. "It's so loud." Darrel suddenly realized, "THAT'S BECAUSE WE'RE ON THE FREEWAY!" "Let's move!" Anne shouted. Anne takes her bag containing Frobo's head and grabs Polly, while Darrel takes Tint, Hop pop and Sprig, and make their way safely out of harm's way.

The group makes it to a safe walkway, then turns around to gaze at the magnificence of the Los Angeles towers. The Good Day Blimp flying across, and the sun shining on the windows. Sprig was in awe until he fell flat on his back. "Am I dreaming?" Anne asked. "If you're dreaming, then I am too," said Darrel.

"There's only one way to be sure," said Anne. She takes out her phone and looks to her reception bars. They instantly went from no service to full 5G. Darrel looked at her phone and the two were amazed. They weren't dreaming after all, they really were home. "WE'RE HOME!" They shouted.

The group starts walking down a walkway. Polly keeps jumping with her new legs, Sprig touches everything he could get his hands on, and Hop pop and Tint continue to gaze at their surroundings. Darrel took a quick glance at Tint and was nervous at how he was acting. Sprig then jumps in a manhole cover, only for Hop pop to pull him out.

"So what's our next move, kids?" Hop pop asked. "I mean so much has happened. Do you think Marcy's...." "She's alive, Hop pop," said Anne. "She's just got to be." Darrel squinted his eyes and grinned his teeth. "We don't know that, Anne," he said.

"Darrel, I'm just trying to be hopeful," said Anne. "Well, I'm being realistic," said Darrel. "I can't think of one person who survived being stabbed in the back like that. Even if they survived, it's going to take a huge life support system to keep them alive."

The group was shocked at his response, and Darrel shook his head. "I'm sorry guys," he said. "But Hop pop is right, a lot has happened, and I need time to process this. I promised Sasha we would come back for them. Now that she's stuck there..."

Anne places her hand on his shoulder to reassure him. "One thing's for sure, we're gonna find a way back," she said. Darrel smiled, along with their amphibious friends. "No doubt about it," said Tint. "Sounds like a plan," said Hop pop.

"But before we do any of that," said Anne. "First thing's first." "We finish our objective we made in Amphibia," said Darrel. The group stops walking and stands directly in front of a blue house with Thai decorations on the front lawn. Darrel and Anne smile, knowing where they are.

"Anne, is this?" Sprig asked. "It is," said Darrel. "My house," said Anne. "This is really happening, I'm gonna see my parents."

Suddenly, Darrel realized that he has to return home as well. And given the fact that his mother is terminally sick, made Darrel's worries increase tenfold. Months of being away made Darrel start fearing that he may be too late. That she either fought hard to fight her illness, or that she gave up because of his disappearance.

"Anne, I gotta get home," he said. "I need to know..." "Anne nodded, "Of course Darrel, and I hope and pray that you see her again." Darrel hugs Anne, "Thank you for being there for me," he said. "Come on Tint." "I'm right behind you," he said.

Darrel ran to his home as fast as he could. Tint followed shortly behind him. Lucky for Darrel, he and Anne don't live too far apart. Darrel wasted no breath and time as he approached his house. A two floor white house with blue window panels on the second floor. The main entrance is a blue door with a wreath that says welcome. Darrel smiled with tears in his eyes and ran up to knock on the door. "Mom! Dad! I'm back!" he shouted. But there was no answer.

He rushes over to his driveway to find only one car parked. "Shouldn't anyone be home?" Tint asked. "No," said Darrel. "Dad's car is gone, the lights are out in the house, that can only mean one thing."

Tint looked in Darrel's eyes, knowing that he knows his worst fear is coming to life. "I know one other place to find them," he said. "But I fear it's where I think it is." Darrel finds his bike back from the school, hiding from plain sight. "Darrel," said Tint. "Someone once told me that being aware of your fear is smart. And overcoming that fear is

the mark of a successful wizard. I read about it in a wizard's journal entry."

Darrel took a deep breath, climbed on his bike, grabbed Tint, told him to hold on tight, and the two rode off to where his family could be.

After a few minutes of bike riding, Darrel and Tint arrive at the Los Angeles Community Hospital. Darrel knows that the hospital is a crowded place, so he needed to come up with a way to sneak Tint inside.

"Tint," he said. "This is going to be tricky, but I think we can pull this off." "What is it?" Tint asked. "If anyone sees you walking and talking, the police will get involved, which leads to scientists experimenting on you, then the government discovering your powers."

Tint gulped in fear, until Darrel put his hand on his shoulder. "But, if you just lie still, they'll think you're a stuffed animal. I think that's how we can sneak past the front desk." "So you just want me to not move at all?" Tint asked. "Exactly," said Darrel. Tint shrugged, "Okay, so long as we don't stick around for too long."

Darrel grabs Tint around his waist and Tint remains motionless as they enter the hospital. They approach the front desk and the receptionist gets off the phone in time to help him. "Can I help you young man?" she asked.

Darrel takes a deep breath and asks her, "Is Sarah Loyallat here? I'm her son." The receptionist was stunned, thinking that he wouldn't want to be here. "Well," she said. "If you're here to see her, then you're not too late. She's at her final moments, if you came to say goodbye."

Darrel could not believe the words out of her mouth, his mother was at the final stage of her illness. Now his fears are realized, and started to choke up. But he knew he must keep going. "Where is

she?" he asked. "Room, A113," said the receptionist. She points to the elevator, "Take the elevator to the top floor and turn left, you'll find her there."

Darrel did as he was told, he took the elevator with Tint still in his arm and his staff in hand. He reached the top floor and turned left until he saw room A113. He turns left and right, hoping that no one he doesn't know is around before he sets Tint down. "It's all clear," he said. And Tint stands beside him. Darrel takes his hand on the door handle, turns it and opens the door.

Inside the room, Darrel finds his mother, sleeping in the hospital bed. She lost all her hair, and her skin was all wrinkly. A heart monitor beats at a slow pace, and IV needles are injected in her left hand. She was all alone in that room, which made Darrel more upset.

Darrel approached her bed slowly and started to sob. He lets his staff lean on the wall and kneels by her side. "Oh mom... I'm so sorry. I did this to you. To our family." His eyes were shut still spouting tears in his eyes. "You've always been there for me. You never gave up on me. You taught me to stand strong, to find my voice. Now hear mine, please. I want you back. I love you."

Tint watches in sadness as Darrel sobs beside his mother. Then he looks at his staff and decides that right now, he doesn't care if he gets caught. He lost someone he cared about, and he felt that he can't let his friend lose someone he cares about.

He waves his hands and gives off a bright green light from his fingertips. He takes his aura and places it on Darrel's mother. The aura travels up to where the sickness is located and the light purges from her pancreas to her head. The light dies down and everything stands quiet.

While Darrel was quietly sobbing, he starts to hear the heart monitor beep at a steady pace. He didn't take notice of it. But what he did feel was a hand patting on his head. He shot straight up to see his

mother smiling. Her hair was magically returned, and her wrinkles were gone.

Darrel's sadness suddenly turned to joy and excitement. "Mom, you're back!" Darrel cried. "Oh Darrel," said his mom. "We both are." The two hugged so tight, Tint started to shed some tears too. "How do you feel mom?" Darrel asked. "Better than before," she said. "It's like the cancer was never there."

The two laugh until they hear another familiar voice. "Sarah? Darrel?" They turn to see Darrel's father and his two sisters. His father was dressed like a professional aviator. His first sister was dressed like a basketball player with the LA Lakers colors and a jersey with the number eight. Darrel's second sister was dressed like a ballerina. They came to check on their mother, only to find two miracles. Their mother healed up, and their brother came back safe and sound.

"Dad! Amelia! Jane!" Darrel cried. "We're back!" The family hugged so hard, Darrel couldn't breathe. "Where were you Darrel?" Sarah asked. "You were gone for five months," said Jane. "What are you wearing?" Amelia asked. "And... who or what is that next to you?" His father asked. The family takes notice of the fire salamander beside Darrel. Jane and Sarah were fascinated, while Amelia and their father were surprised.

"You guys wouldn't believe me if I told you," said Darrel. "Matthew, I think we should believe him," said Sarah. "I'm willing to believe anything," said Matthew. "Start from the beginning, Darrel." Darrel smiled and went straight to his story.

While Darrel talked to his family, they sat and listened. Jane and Amelia were most fascinated to know that Darrel ran into wizards. Matthew and Sarah were very thankful to Tint for looking after Darrel when no one else would. As Darrel continued with his story, he left out a few major details, such as how he and Anne are together, and the last moments on how he escaped the king.

"If it's alright with you, I would like to tell you how I came back from Amphibia another day," said Darrel. "A lot has happened, and I just want to spend time with my family." Sarah nodded, "Of course Darrel. You tell us when you're ready."

"So can you still do magic here?" Amelia asked. "I think so," said Darrel. He tries to make a simple light spell, but it only goes as big as a marble. "I guess magic isn't as strong here as it is in Amphibia," said Darrel. "Uncle Cronaxx told us that magic always comes from our inner emotions," said Tint. "Maybe it's just because we're tired." Darrel nods in agreement.

Later on, Darrel, his family, and Tint leave the hospital while Sarah stays behind to let the doctors know she's okay, and is ready to fill out release forms. Until then, Matthew takes the kids and Tint home.

Tint started to grow fond of Darrel's family. He played his flute and Jane danced to the melody like the pied piper. Then, Tint and Amelia play some basketball in the backyard. Luckily, the yard was fenced off so no one could see him. Darrel was happy to see Tint and his sisters get along.

Eventually, Darrel gave Tint a disguise using Jane's old yellow raincoat, gloves, headphones to cover his gills, a mask to cover his face, and socks with sandals. Darrel got out of his wizard robes and dressed into something more casual and clean. However, to remember his journey in Amphibia, he takes a piece of his robe and wraps it around his right arm.

Darrel felt happy returning home, but somewhere in his mind told him that his adventure is far from over. He suddenly gets a sharp pain in his mind. Amelia and Tint take notice, and Tint assures Amelia that Darrel's been through this before.

Darrel delves deep into his mind and sees flashes of images back in Amphibia. The Newtopian castle was heavily fortified by robot frogs. Andiras sends a robot to hunt down him and Anne. And finally,

something Darrel didn't expect. An image of Marcy inside a strange tank, attached with wires and a breathing tube.

Darrel comes back to reality after being shown those images in his head and shows a feared look on his face. "Darrel," said Tint. "What's wrong?" "Anne is in trouble," said Darrel. "Andrias sent a robot to hunt us down."

"Wait, are you talking about King Andrias from your story?" Amelia asked. "Yes," said Darrel. "The king is a tyrant conqueror. And he won't stop at nothing until he destroys us." "What do we do?" Amelia asked. "What you're going to do, is get Jane and stay inside until I come back. Tint, get your disguise. We're going to find Anne."

The three kids get in the house and Amelia goes directly to Jane's room. Tint gets his disguise on and follows Darrel to the front door. Before they could go, Matthew stops them. "You're not going anywhere without me," he said. "If there's danger going on in this town, I want to protect you."

"The least you can do Dad," said Darrel. "Is take us to the Boonchuys. Anne is there with the Plantars and they don't know what's coming." Matthew smiles and takes his keys to the car. "Let's roll."

The three arrive at the Boonchuy's house and find that their car is not there. "They must've left somewhere," said Matthew. "Yeah," said Darrel. "There's no way that Mr. and Mrs. Boonchuy would leave Anne and the Plantars alone." "But, where did they go?" Tint asked.

Darrel looks around and finds a piece of paper on the ground. He picks it up and it turns out to be a shopping list. Then Matthew has an idea, "I think I know where they could've gone."

The three make their way to the supermarket called the 99 Ranchers. "The Boonchuys always go there during food shopping," said Matthew. "So, what's the plan Darrel?" "There's no doubt that Andrias' robot is targeting me and Anne," said Darrel. "So we'll keep

that robot out of sight, and try not to scare anyone. Meanwhile, you go find Mr. and Mrs. Boonchuy and you keep them safe and distracted."

Matthew nods, "I'm so proud of you for stepping up Darrel. Usually you're very quiet." "What can I say," said Darrel. "Amphibia made me the man I am today." "But Darrel," said Tint. "These robots are impervious to magic, and we don't have any swords to slice them. Plus our magic powers are scarce." Darrel took a deep breath, "We have to try. Whatever it takes."

The three enter the supermarket and the three split up to find the Boonchuys. Darrel and Tint look around for a few minutes and find Anne and the Plantars at Noodle Time, a small place where people dine out on fresh noodles.

"Anne! Plantars!" Darrel cried. "Darrel!" Anne replied. The two hug with happiness. "You look like you're in a good mood today," said Anne. "That's because I healed his mom," said Tint. "What?! How?" the group asked. "Uh, hello," said Tint. "I'm a wizard. Healing is part of our training."

"Darrel that's great news," said Anne. "Thanks, Anne," said Darrel. "But that's not why I'm here. I had a vision, something had arrived in this world, and was sent by Andrias to hunt us down."

Suddenly Sprig shouted, "Killer Robot!" The two humans turn around and find nothing. Anne thought he was being superstitious, "Sprig for the last-" Darrel squashed Anne for a second and squinted his eyes. He peeks around only for him and Anne to be grabbed by a mysterious force.

Sprig and Tint throw noodle bowls at it, only to reveal the robot Andrias sent. "It can camouflage!" Darrel cried. The robot lets go of Anne and Darrel and throws a bowl back at the amphibians.

The group gives chase from the robot and tries to make it very discrete. Matthew sees them running away, so he tries to keep the

Boonchuys from noticing. To drown out the noise, Anne plays music over the intercom. The shoppers either jam out to the music, or leave at a quick pace.

The fight soon led its way into the employees-only section. Inside a large freezer. The group hides from the robot as it starts scanning the area. Anne and Darrel hide behind boxes. "I'm getting real tired of this guy," said Anne. "Me too," said Darrel.

The two humans look to see the amphibians frozen solid and remember that they're in freezing temperatures. The robot catches them and throws them across the room. Anne tries all she can to activate her blue powers. Darrel had to think of how they were able to unlock them in the first place.

Tint and Sprig try to stop the robot with what little they can do. Only for the robot to turn its targets on the amphibians. Seeing their friends in trouble made the two humans tick. Their eyes started glowing blue and red, and their fists glowed as well. Darrel's staff was at full strength.

The robot sensed their energy sources and turned around. "If you think we're just going to sit here and let you hurt our friends..." said Anne in her calamitous voice. "You've got another thing coming!"

Anne and Darrel use their super speed and slide under the robot. "Hey Andrias!" Darrel shouted. "If you're listening, this is your only warning! Stay away from MY HOME!" The two punch the robot causing major damage to its hull. The robot retreats, knowing the longer it stays, the more chance it'll be destroyed.

Darrel and Anne leave the freezer with what little strength they have after the fight. The amphibians thaw from their frozen blocks and are amazed with what the two humans accomplished. However, Anne and Darrel collapse from exhaustion.

"They're okay, said Hop pop. "I think using those powers takes a lot out of them," said Tint. "We gotta do something," said Polly. "If her

parents see them like this..." "I've got just what they might need."

The amphibians look to see Matthew holding open durian fruit. The Plantars grew nervous until Tint spoke up. "It's okay," said Tint. "It's Darrel's father." He puts the fruit under the kids' noses and the two wake up instantly.

"Ugh, gross!" Darrel shouted. "Dad? Tint?" "Guys?" Anne woke up too. The amphibians hug their human friends. "Oh hey, there you guys are," said Mr. Boonchuy. Darrel smiled seeing Anne's parents again. "Mr. and Mrs. Boonchuy," said Darrel. "It's great to see you again." "I'm so happy to see you've returned home," said Mrs. Boonchuy. "And to bring my daughter back safe and sound. I can't thank you enough."

"It's nothing, Mrs. Boonchuy," said Darrel. "All that matters is that she's home safe." "Speaking of safe," said Mr. Boonchuy, "How was your supermarket journey?" "It was great," said Anne. "Walking around a boring old supermarket is just the thrill we needed."

"By the way," said Darrel. "I noticed you needed fish on your shopping list so I got some for you." He hands the Boonchuys the fish and they take it. "Thank you very much," said Mrs. Boonchuy. "By the way, your father told us everything about you and your adventures in Amphibia. So if ever you want to stop by and see the frog people, you're more than welcome to." "Consider this a thank you for bringing our daughter home," said Mr. Boonchuy. "Thanks, you two," said Darrel.

As the group leaves the store, Darrel and Anne grow concerned about their calamity powers. "Anne, about our powers," said Darrel. "How did you feel? Like at unease?" "You two didn't look too good back there," said Hop pop. "Yeah," said Anne. "I'm thinking we shouldn't use those powers if we can help it. I don't know how else to describe it, but using them feels bad."

"Well," said Darrel. "We've got a lot on our plates. But whatever happens next, one thing's for sure." He takes Anne's hand. "I'm glad

you're here with me." Anne smiled. "Thanks, Darrel. So can you open the door for me? I'm trying to move my arms, but nothing's happening."

Darrel opens the door for Anne and she and the Plantars hop on in, ready for the ride home. Darrel and Tint wave goodbye, and then Matthew comes to collect the two. "So, are we going to see that robot again?" Tint asked. "Definitely," replied Darrel. "But until then, we'll be ready." "I'll get my tools," said Matthew. "You're going to need all the help you can get." Darrel and Tint smiled, knowing that they're not alone. Not anymore.

Halloween Special: The Shut In

Halloween Special - The Shut In

Happy Halloween everyone! I've taken the opportunity to give you guys my version of Amphibia's Halloween special, The Shut In. Just so we're all aware, this chapter is not canon to the main storyline. So we'll get to read a familiar character back in the group. Well Amphibi-fans, time to bundle up and pray that the nightmares don't haunt you, cause we're about to start our Halloween Chapter!

Tonight of all nights in the world of Amphibia is a night of terror, desperation, and monsters. And when the frogs say terror, they mean terror. For tonight is known as their annual shut-in. What seemed like a traditional day for frogs is more like a warning. What is the shut in you say? Let's take a dive and find out.

Our tale begins in the city of Wartwood where the citizens gather supplies needed to make it through the night. Around this time of year, pumpkins were in season. There were pumpkins around every corner of every house.

Darrel, Anne, Sprig, Tint, and Polly were gathering supplies as well. They knock on Felicia's tea house and Felicia opens her door. She was welcomed with a, "Stay inside, hide your eyes. Give us practical supplies."

"Oh you are just in time," she said. "I got one last box of nails. And they're rusty." "Ooh, good stuff," said Sprig as Felicia dumps the nails in Anne's sack. "Thank you," said Anne and Sprig.

"Happy shut in kids," said Felicia as she shut the door. The kids leave with their sacks now practically heavy. "Whew, man this is a

workout," said Anne. "Like any help?" Darrel asked. "I could levitate our sacks."

Anne smiled, "That's so sweet, Darrel. But I can handle my own." "Okay," said Darrel. "So Tint, Sprig, tell us again. What is this shut in? Is this like a holiday of some sorts?"

"It's not a holiday, Darrel," Tint replied. "It's the annual blue moon shut in," said Sprig. Polly jumps onto Anne's shoulder, "We need the supplies to survive for the night."

"Well you know," Anne said. "We have a similar thing in my world called Halloween." "It's true," said Darrel. "Kids and adults celebrate the night wearing costumes, carving pumpkins, saying 'Trick-or-Treat' and get free candy."

"Free Candy!" Polly cried. "What's the catch?" "If you don't get your treat, you must trick them." Polly awed at their human holiday. "That is the most beautiful thing I've ever heard."

"I remember this one time," said Darrel. "Me, Sasha, Anne, and Marcy didn't get a treat from an old woman. She hogged all the sweets in her house, so we tricked her. We glued her to her welcome mat, then sprayed her with a hose. After that, we ransacked her house of her treats and went our way." Darrel sighed, "Good times."

Soon, Hop pop and Cronaxx pulled up with Bessie. "Hey kids," said Hop pop. "What'd y'all get for tonight's shut in?" "Show us the goods," said Cronaxx.

"I got a hatchet," said Polly. "I got a vial of poison," said Tint. "I got a first aid kit," said Tint. "I got a flamethrower," said Anne. "I got a rock," said Darrel blandly. Cronaxx smiled, "Impressive Darrel. Rocks can come in handy as strong projectiles."

Darrel smiles back at the wise salamander, while Anne fires her flamethrower. The gang hops on Bessie and rides back to the farm.

Along the way, Anne and Darrel watch the frogs boarding windows and carving pumpkins.

"You guys sure this isn't a holiday?" Anne asked. "They look like Jack-o-Lanterns." "Those are fear gourds, Anne," said Hop pop. "And yes, I'm sure. The shut in is dangerous."

Cronaxx and Tint use their magic to create a dark cloud to show the humans. "For tonight," said Cronaxx. "The moon turns blue, and anyone who gazes upon it becomes a creature of unspeakable horror."

Then a frog screams, seeing their illusion, thinking it's real. "I DON'T WANNA DIE!" Then he jumps through his window breaking his furniture on the other side.

"I have to agree with this, Anne," said Darrel. "If a wizard says it's real, then it has to be real." "No one actually knows, Darrel," said Sprig. "And no one wants to find out!" Hop pop cried. "Ever," said Polly.

The group arrive at the Plantar farm, with boards blocking all the doors and windows. "Wow, you guys went all out here," said Darrel. "It's actually kind of nice," said Sprig. "We sit by the fire..." "And tell spooky stories," said Polly. "And Bessie hides in her shell till morning."

"Cool," said Anne. "Now let's get this holiday started." "It's not a holiday, Anne," said the Plantars, Tint, and Cronaxx. "Alright, fine," said Anne. "Now would you two grab the rest of the decorations from the cart?" Hop pop asked.

"It's totally a holiday," whispered Anne. "I second that," said Darrel. "I heard that!" Hop pop shouted. "Opinions, Hop pop," said Darrel as he grabbed the decorations. "Opinions."

Inside the house, the group gather at the fireplace and prepare to tell stories. Hop pop explains the rules, "Remember kids, the stories

have to have actually happened and be scary enough to remind us, NOT TO GO OUTSIDE! Okay kids, who wants to go first?"

"Ooh oh, I do!" Polly cried. "This is the first year I have one that's really scary." She turns off the lights and stands by the fireplace. "I'm telling the story of A night at the Inn!"

Darrel calls timeout on her story, "Are you referring to the story of how we came across the cannibal frogs at that inn the other day?" Polly groaned, "Aww! You know what happens?" "We were all there for that," said Anne.

"Give me a minute to think of another one," said Polly. "Someone else go." Anne suddenly gets an idea of a story. "I've got one. Now this didn't happen to me, but it did happen to my phone! Get ready for the tale of, PHONE MO!"

"What?" Sprig asked. "All will be explained, Sprig," said Darrel. "Onto the story!"

Anne begins to tell her tale about Phone Mo. It all starts at a middle school much like Anne's and Darrel's. But this place was called Saint Joe's School. Her story consists of Anne being called Anna, and Darrel being called Darren.

They come across more of their friends. Most of them are human versions of the frogs they've encountered. There's Twig, Molly, Haddy, Brodie, and Flint. The group was showing videos to each other just for a few laughs.

Haddie and Brodie tell the group about the new trending animal video. And warned them that this video is cursed, and whoever watches it disappears. Anna, Darren, Twig, and Flint were concerned. But Molly wasn't, and proceeded to watch the video.

Later that day, Darren and Anna started to notice their friends disappearing one by one but shrugged off the fact that the curse was real.

However, as they went home, Anna started to see strange things happening to her phone. Little did Darren and Flint know that Anna watched the video behind their backs. Her video goes on and the cute animal creature climbs out her phone.

It soon grows to become a horrifying monster. Anna tries to escape, but the creature grabs her with its tongue. She was scared out of her life she called it not cute. Which made the creature flinch in response.

It soon became clear how Anna could stop the creature. It was trailing with so many likes, that no one disliked the video. So if there were dislikes and hate comments, the creature would be destroyed.

And that's what Anna did. With one bad comment, the creature exploded freeing Haddie, Brodie, and Molly. Twig, Flint, and Darren enter the house and invite them to a new burger joint across the haunted part of town. As the kids leave, eggs that were splattered across the room started hatching little offspring of the creatures.

"The end," concluded Anne. The group was impressed, until Anne got a notification of Wally's birthday today. "It's such a shame that Wally has to stay inside on his birthday," said Tint. "Maybe next year we should invite him to our farm," said Sprig.

"I'm sure he's fine right now," said Anne. "Alright Polly, back to you." "Okay," said Polly. "Once upon a time an entire town got taken over by zombie mushrooms in a story I like to call, 'Children of the Spore!'"

Only Hop pop and Cronaxx stopped her right there. "That story's no good either," said Hop pop. "We were all there," said Cronaxx. The group nodded in agreement.

"Alright, alright," said Polly. "Someone else go." "Okay, I've got one," said Hop pop. "And it's the scariest one yet. It's called: DEAD END!"

Hop pop begins his story with a young version of himself with a huge flow of thick hair. He took a job as a stagecoach, with Bessie as his snail. He kept on bragging about his hair until Anne told him to move along.

One day, Hop pop was driving along, until he picked up a customer in the middle of nowhere. The customer was very strange wearing a high class suit and a derby hat. Hop pop however didn't protest, he was just a regular customer.

Wanting to keep the journey from getting quiet, he asked his customer what business he's in. His customer replied that he was in the frog business. Hop pop started to feel unease with the reply, but kept going.

They go to the first stop, which happens to be at Old Man Hopkins' house. He grew sick with the red leg, but his customer assured him he wouldn't for much longer. He goes into the house, then Hop pop hears a noise that sounds like furniture crashing. Then, his customer comes out with a malicious grin on his face.

Hop pop begins to question his customer's motives. But he reminds Hop pop he had a schedule to keep. He stops at another house only to find a half snake half scorpion creature enter the window of the house. It was called a slaughter snake. Hop pop turns to find his customer missing.

Hop pop turns to the house as he hears screaming, then turns back to see his customer ready for the next stop. It soon came clear to Hop pop that his customer is none other than Death, in amphibious form.

Soon, they arrive at the Plantar's farm. And Hop pop suddenly realizes that he's next. However, when the reaper struck down with his scythe, he cut off his hair instead of him. Hop pop cried in anguish, while Death took off looking good with Hop pop's hair.

"And that, children, is how I lost my hair," said Hop pop. The kids groaned in disgust. "Hop pop that's messed up," said Anne. "I wasn't that scared," said Sprig. Hop pop leans in and whispers, "Oh you will be."

"So Darrel," said Tint. "Do you have a scary story to tell?" "I do," said Darrel. "But, I want to give Polly a chance if she has a story to tell." "Of course I do," said Polly.

"Okay, there was a time when frogs lived in fear when a monster lurked in the woods." The gang started to get a great feeling about this story. "It had a giant head, spindly legs, and a hideous face bump!" Polly pulls out a small drawing that just reveals itself as Anne.

The gang went back to being unamused. "Polly, does your scary story revolve around Anne?" Darrel asked. "Because it's not scary." "Way to spoil the ending, Darrel!" Polly groaned. "Also, that drawing is insulting," said Anne. "Darrel can draw way better than that."

The gang looked at the viewing audience for a few minutes, until they looked back at each other. "Oh oh, I've got a story," said Sprig. "A few days ago, Ivy and I were playing bug ball on the old court in the woods." "Wait, what's your story called?" Anne asked. "Actually I don't know-" "SKIN DEEP!"

Sprig's story starts with Sprig and Ivy playing bug ball. And Ivy drops her hat blocking Sprig's shot. She asks Sprig to look away, but Sprig assures her he likes it either way. The two head into the dark parts of the forest heading into an old cottage. It was said that the legendary seamstress lives there, and whoever trespasses on her property, the frogs get robbed of their skin and she wears them.

Ivy kicks the door down and the two search for their ball. Sprig eventually finds it, but inadvertently opens a barrel revealing frog skins. The two run to the door, only for the seamstress to find them in her house. The creature groans, 'Fresh skins,' and the two frogs scream.

After a scuffle, Sprig removes the seamstress' head, revealing it to be a glass frog, who is sensitive to her looks. The two take this as an advantage and burn the hut to the ground. They run off into the forest, ending the story.

"And we never saw her again," concluded Sprig. Everyone gasped, considering the fact that Sprig left them hanging with so many questions. However, Sprig assures them that everything's okay.

Darrel smiled, "Okay, I think it's time to tell a story that's twice as scary as that." "Are you sure?" Tint asked. "I'm sure," replied Darrel. "Unless of course, you have a story planned out, Polly?"

Polly shook her head, "Nope, I'm still bummed," "Okay then," Darrel walks in front of the fireplace and begins his story.

"Something beyond comprehension was happening to a little boy, on this street, in this building..." The story begins with Darrel holding a briefcase standing in front of a hotel, with the moon shining down below him and a light fog breezing through the area. "A man had come as a last resort, because no one else would go near the place."

"THE MESSORCIST"

A knock was made on the door to the front desk. An old man, who resembles much of Cronaxx, opens the door. He is wearing a green robe and is wearing fancy nightgown clothing. He is surprised to see Darrel, dressed in clean clothes, looking down on the old man.

"I hear you've been expecting me," he said. "You are the..?" Asked the old man. "That's right," replied Darrel. "I am....the housekeeper." A flash of lightning is shown followed by a roll of thunder.

Yes, thank goodness you've come," said the old man. He lets Darrel in his lobby with his desk and name tag on top, 'Connor.' "I'm about to lose my business," said Connor. "It's that new guest that arrived a

couple days ago. I don't know what's gotten into him. He's trashing not only his room, but the entire motel too."

Darrel wouldn't back down, "Trust me pal, I've got two energetic sisters that leave a trail of mess around my house. This should be a piece of cake." Suddenly they hear loud music coming from the room across the hall on the second floor.

"Is that a rockstar staying here?" Darrel asked. "I swear, he's not like anything I've ever seen," said Connor. The two proceed up the stairs and down the hall. "Oh come on, It's clear this hotel isn't used to a rockstar living here," said Darrel. "It's common that they trash their hotel rooms."

The two approach the door and prepare to open it. "You just got to walk in there, look him in the eye, and remind him who's-"

The two see the entire room a mess from top to bottom. Soda spills on the carpets, the toilets and shower drains clogged with mountains of hair, bags of chips all over the floor, and bed sheets crumpled and ripped up. The walls were painted with red paint displaying satanic symbols and writing.

"Uh oh," said Darrel. "I thought you said hotels deal with rock stars," said Connor. "Yes," said Darrel. "But death metal guitarists are a category ten."

He greets the guitarist, only to be replied with his head spinning around and plays a powerful rift on the guitar. "Oh no," said Darrel. "He recently made a deal with the devil." "What can we do?" Connor asked. "We have to get him to tire out his rock n roll attitude," said Darrel. "Then, we have to shake him out of his deal."

He reapproaches the guitarists and says, "Rock on dude! Who are you?!" "I'm Talon!" The guitarist announced. "And I'm going to bring this building down!"

He shreds his guitar again, making cracks in the wall. "Then I issue a challenge," said Darrel. "Since you're here until tomorrow, I bet I can keep this building in top shape until six in the morning. If you succeed in bringing the hotel down, I'll be your personal steward for all eternity,"

Talon smiled and said in a demonic voice, "Deal!" Then, the two went at it and the night went by fast. Talon kept wrecking the place, but Darrel kept it in top shape. And whatever was messed up or destroyed, he always finds a way to keep it pristine.

As the night withered away, Talon grew frustrated, then decided to make a final move. "Stage Dive!" He cried. But as Talon jumps from the bed, he finds himself jumping out the window as well. The glass shattered and Talon fell until he hit a flight of stairs below. Everytime he hits the ground, he delves deeper below the stairwell.

At the bottom of the stairs Talon falls head first, Connor and Darrel race down the stairs and find the death metal guitarist floating in the air. Dark clouds surround the human as if something was being pulled out of him. Then with a flash of light, Talon drops to the ground and the clouds vanish. Darrel and Connor loom over to the hotel guest as his eyes open.

"The end," concluded Darrel. Hop pop and Cronaxx were impressed with his story. The kids hid behind their seats. Anne, however, feels disbelief. "There's no way that actually happened," she said.

Darrel smiled, "But it's true Anne." "Oh yeah," she replied. "What happened to the quote unquote devil?" Darrel closed his eyes, "It's very simple Anne. He attached himself..." He opens his eyes to reveal a demonic possession. "To a new host!"

Anne screamed just as the entity burst the door open. The group began to scream with fright, until they heard laughter. "Oh my god! I got you guys good!" Darrel laughed. "Wait! Where's the devil?" Hop pop asked. "There is no devil," replied Darrel. "I just couldn't resist telling a scary story."

Darrel was then met with a punch to the arm. "Darrel Loyality! You nearly scared me to death! I thought you really were possessed," said Anne. "Okay, I deserved that," said Darrel. "So, I'm not dating a devil?" Anne asked. "Nope," replied Darrel. "It's all me. The real me."

Anne smiled, as she and Darrel held hands and touched foreheads. "Uh, guys," said Tint. "Where's Polly?" "She was just here a second ago," said Sprig. "What if she slipped out while the door was opened and ran off to look at the blue moon?!"

"That's exactly what she did," said Cronaxx. "That's nonsense," said Anne. "I'm looking at her right now," replied Cronaxx.

Polly is shown to be outside looking at the blue moon. The group head outside with an umbrella to protect them from the moon. "Polly! Don't look!" They cried. Polly cackled with villainous glee, only to not feel any side effects.

"It looks like the legend is false," said Hop pop. "I wouldn't be so sure," said Cronaxx. "Usually, the effects run their course in a few minutes."

And Cronaxx wasn't wrong, Polly started to feel the effects of the moon run through her tiny body. Soon she gained massive muscles in her arms and fur and fangs grew as well. The group ran back into the house scared out of their minds. "Anne, can we agree on one thing!?" Darrel asked. "Yes," replied Anne. "THIS IS DEFINITELY NOT A HOLIDAY!" They shouted simultaneously.

-Happy Shut in Everyone!

Hop Til You Drop

Chapter 47 - Hop till you drop

After the event at the supermarket, Darrel and Tint agreed to lay low for a while. The drive back home felt so quick to Tint, being that he has never been in a car before. Darrel sighed in relief that his family was safe, but was a little concerned with his magical abilities. Ever since he returned home, he started to lose touch with the Eternal Staff. And the staff started to fade its color.

When they got back, Jane and Amelia wanted to know what happened. The big brother explained to the two. They were upset at first, being out of the picture from the supermarket. But, they knew that it was for the best. Then, Tint decided the next time that they went out, they could come along. So long as they stay out of trouble.

The next few days passed and Darrel and Tint were relaxing in his bedroom, wondering what to do next. Tint looks to Darrel's computer and asks, "Hey Darrel, is that where you make your videos?" Darrel nodded, "Yes Tint, of course it is." "Why don't you show me how you make one?" Tint asked.

Darrel shook his head in shame, "I can't." He walks up to his computer and opens the Lock Screen on the monitor, asking for a password. "I can't remember my password," he said. "And even if I knew what it was, I don't know what video to make. So whenever I feel sad or lose inspiration, I strum on my guitar here."

Darrel takes his guitar from the corner of his bedroom and plays his Future Days song he played in Amphibia. "So what are we going to do about our magic predicament? My staff is barely colorful, and we can't even cast a ball of fire."

"I told you," said Tint. "My Uncle said that magic comes from emotions. But other than that, I don't know how to get our magic to

work again." Darrel sighed in defeat. "But still, this is a nice world you have here."

Darrel nodded, "Indeed it is a marvelous world. But like Amphibia, there are also dangers in this world. What kind of world would we live in without problems to solve?" Tint was amazed by his words, and nodded in agreement. He looks out the window and takes his words into consideration.

After a few more days, Darrel gets a surprise call from his mother. "Hey Darrel, put me on speaker phone." Darrel pushes the speakerphone button, allowing Tint, Jane and Amelia to hear her. "Hi Mom," said Jane. "How's it going mother?" Amelia asked.

"You'll never guess where I am," said Sarah. Suddenly, the doorbell rings at the house. "Tint disguise!" Darrel cried. Tint rushed into the closet, then came out in his rain gear to hide himself from the public.

Jane opens the door to reveal their mother, finally checked out of the hospital, in a positive way. "Mom!" Darrel cried. "You're out!" The parents close the door and the family gets in for a group hug. "So what did the doctors say?" Amelia asked. "They were at first shocked," their mom replied. "They ran some tests, and all of them came out saying I'm as healthy as the average human. However, they did say they want to appoint a checkup for me. Just to make sure there's nothing wrong with me.'

"All that matters is that we're all here together," said Matthew. The family remains in a hug, and Tint smiles with joy. "Get in here," said Darrel. "You're part of our family the moment you healed my mom." Tint smiled and got in their hug.

The very next day, Darrel and Tint enjoyed a good breakfast and sat in the living room together. They watched television until noon. Then, Darrel got up from his seat.

"Hey Tint," he said. "I think it's time to plan our next move." "What should we do?" Tint asked. "I think we should help Anne and the

Plantars fix Frobo," replied Darrel. "We're going to need all the help we can get."

Tint smiled, "Yeah, that sounds like a good idea. With Frobo reactivated, we can also get a glimpse of what's going on in Amphibia. All those mechanical robot soldiers work in sequence with each other. So with Frobo's eyes..."

"We can see Andrias' next move," finished Darrel. "Let's get to work!" "But we don't know anything about robotics, or technology," said Tint with a slump.

Then, Darrel got an idea. "I think now's a good time to recruit some help. It may be risky, but I want to trust them." Tint grew curious, "Who's them?"

"I know a couple of guys from school. They were close to being friends, but they were great classmates of mine. One's fascinated with remote controlled cars, but he is great at tinkering with a few things. The other is sensitive, but he means well. He's very handy when it comes to tools. And when I say Handy... You'll know what I mean. We were a great team of three when it came to the science fair. We tried to make a robot out of car parts. We almost pulled it off, but we didn't give up."

"You think they can help us fix Frobo?" Tint asked. "We have to try," replied Darrel. "It's not like we have any other choices of who else we can trust."

Tint grew weary, he didn't want to be caught by the scientists in Darrel's world. But if there's anything he learned about his time training under Cronaxx, is that life gives you risks worth taking.

"Okay," said Tint. "So how do we find them?" Darrel looks to the tv screen that shows the city mall and smiles. "I think I know where they could be." Then, he called his sisters. "Jane! Amelia! It's time for an adventure!" Jane and Amelia raced down, geared up and ready. "We're going to the mall."

The Loyalitat family drive down to the mall together for the first time since Sarah got sick. Sarah took the girls to get some food at the old court. Matthew took some time to browse at the hardware store. Darrel and Tint went to the hobby shop where they got a popular line of remote controlled cars.

"Is this the place?" Tint asked. "His father is usually at the front register, he hangs around at the mall from time to time," said Darrel. The two reach the front register to find a man in his late thirties manning the front desk. His name tag reveals itself as ' . '

"Mr. Munroad?" Darrel asked. Mr. Munroad perked up, "Darrel is that you?! It's been so long." "Indeed," said Darrel. "Have you seen Ivan? I need to speak with him." Mr. Munroad points to the direction he went. "He's down on the first floor with his friend," he replied.

Darrel smiled, "Thanks, Mr. Munroad." And he and Tint leave the shop and make their way to the first floor of the mall. They reach the small fountain in the middle of the mall. There, they find Hop pop, in disguise, gazing at the coins in the water.

"Hey, Hop pop," said Tint. "What are you doing here?" "Hey there you two," said Hop pop. "Did you know that there are free copper coins in this fountain?! And they're ripe for the taking!" Darrel shook his head, "Actually Hop pop, they're-"

Before Darrel could explain, he spotted two boys walking up to the fountain. One of them has brown hair, freckles on his face, wearing a blue striped t-shirt and jeans. His left arm is shown to be a robotic prosthetic. The other boy is shown swinging a model car in the air. He has black hair, wears round glasses on his face. He is wearing a brownish orange sweater with a wrench and hammer on the front.

"There they are," said Darrel. He and Tint rush off to meet the two boys. Then, Hop pop smirks, taking the chance at getting coins from the fountain. However, he was being watched, and not by Anne.

Darrel waves to the two boys, "Jake, Ivan!" They perk up and see Darrel waving to them. "Darrel?!" Jake cried. "You're back!" "I can't believe it!" Ivan exclaimed. The three exchange high fives and bro-shakes. "How's that arm holding up, Jake?" Darrel asked. "It's got more surprises than you'll ever know," Jake replied.

"So where were you all this time?" Ivan asked. "You wouldn't believe me if I told you," said Darrel, "And trust me, you wouldn't believe it." "Try us," said Jake.

Darrel looked to his surroundings and signaled the two to follow him and Tint to a safer place. They walk to a quiet place in the mall and Darrel takes a deep breath.

"If I tell you guys what's going on, would you promise me that you'll keep this a secret?" he asked. "Why is it a secret?" Ivan asked. "Darrel, are you sure we can trust them?" Tint asked. Darrel nodded, "Go ahead,"

Tint was prepared to take off his mask and headphones. When suddenly, "BANG!" They hear a loud noise, and feel shaking across the ground. Then they hear screaming. They see a giant egg rolling around the mall, and the crowd begins to scatter. "Is that a pink child riding that art sculpture?" Jake asked.

Darrel suddenly jumped, "Pink?" He asked. He looks to see the disguised Sprig rolling on top of the egg. "Oh no," said Tint. "We gotta do something!" Darrel turned to Ivan and Jake, "Think you guys can help us?"

Jake and Ivan smiled and nodded, "Anything we can do to help." "Get all the people on this floor either out of the mall or onto the second floor," said Darrel. "After that, come up with a way to stop that egg!"

The group split up and Tint and Darrel chased after Sprig. "Sprig!" Tint cried. "I may have touched something!" Sprig replied. "Hang on Sprig, we'll get you down!"

"Darrel! Tint!" The two turn to see Anne rushing down the escalator. "Anne! Thank goodness you're here," said Darrel.

"Look Out!" Anne takes Darrel and Tint's arms and pulls them out of the way of the oncoming egg. "Thanks, Anne," said Darrel.

Then, another familiar scream was made. It was Polly rushing out of a Construct-A-Carnivore store with angry moms and toddlers chasing her out. "Gangway! Angry Moms coming through!" Polly cried.

"Polly?!" Darrel cried. "What's happening?!" Anne was about to explain to Darrel and Tint about what was going on. But then...

"Help me guys! Help me!" Hop pop cried. They turn to see Hop pop running from mall security with his skin all green and his pockets full of coins. "Hop pop!?" Anne cried. "Why are you green?"

"It must be the fountain Anne," said Darrel. "I caught him gazing at the coins in the fountain, that he must've jumped in. The green skin means that there was chlorine in the water.

"He's right!" Screamed Hop pop. "The cursed fountain did this to me! You were right Anne, everything has its price!"

"Okay, Darrel, Tint, first things first, we got to clean up this mess," said Anne. Darrel and Tint nodded.

"We've got your back!" The three turn to see Jake and Ivan at the ready with a couple of remote-controlled cars. "We've cleared out this floor of any other shoppers. You're all clear. Go get your friends."

Darrel, Tint, and Anne split up to grab the Plantars. Darrel goes after Hop pop running away from security. Tint goes after Polly running away from the angry mothers. And Anne goes after Sprig who's still rolling for his life.

Jake and Ivan use the remote-controlled cars to help them stop the rolling egg. The cars go at full speed and flip over onto their backs, exposing their wheels to the sky. Just as the egg rolled onto the cars, the egg slowed down when the wheels went in reverse.

Sprig was relieved as soon as Anne grabbed him and they got off. "Hey Jake, Ivan, thanks for the help," said Anne. "Anytime," said Ivan.

Tint raced to Polly's side, with the mothers still chasing after her. "Tint, do something!" Tint looked to his surroundings and found a trampoline, a flagpole, and a daycare center with a ball pit. He grabs Polly and jumps on the trampoline. He grabs the flagpole, and Polly screams with joy.

They make their way to the second floor. Tint grabs another disguise, and gets Polly in the ball pit. "No matter what happens," said Tint. "Stay down." Polly did as she was told, just as the mothers came up to where they were.

"Looking for a couple of troublemakers?" Tint asked in a low voice. The mothers nod, and Tint points them to the far side of the mall. The mothers race off, and Tint and Polly sneak away and out of the mall.

Hop pop ends up running into a corner with the security guard behind him. "I've got you now!" Darrel walks up behind the two. "There you are. I've been looking all over for you Uncle Hank," he said. Hop pop was confused, "Wha?"

Darrel gets on one knee and whispers, "Play along." "I'm so sorry sir, has he caused you any problems today?" The security guard replied, "He's a wish stealer. I caught him stealing coins from the fountain."

Darrel shook his head, "That's what happens when Uncle Hank doesn't take his medication. And I told you that you can't be swimming. You know you're allergic to chlorinated water. Now we have to get you home and soak it all off."

He turns to the security guard and returns all the coins Hop pop stole. "I'm really sorry sir," he said. "You won't have to worry about him after today." "I hope not," said the security guard. "Make sure he gets his medicine, and put his shirt back on. He looks like he's starting to ooze."

Darrel takes Hop pop and regroups with the others; they all leave the mall and take a breather at the dumpster. "That was close," said Tint. "Guess we failed our trials," said Sprig. "Oh you think?" Polly asked sarcastically.

"Wait, what trials?" Darrel asked. Anne sighed and decided to tell Darrel everything.

She explained to her that Sprig kept trying to touch everything he could get his hands on. Polly had a short fuse, no pun intended, and Hop pop was too gullible to be scammed by other humans.

When Anne couldn't handle keeping them out of danger, Mr and Mrs Boonchuy smirked, because it sounded like Anne was being a parent. They told her to be patient and ease them into the world. So Anne came up with an idea.

She challenged them to go through trials without failing, or they can't leave the Boonchuy house ever again. "But, I'm the one that failed. I shouldn't have put them through this in the first place," said Anne. "Too much too soon?" Darrel asked. "Yep," said Hop pop. "But don't feel too bad Anne. Turns out we could stand to learn a few things about your world."

"I just really thought throwing you into the deep end would work," said Anne. "I mean it worked for me in Amphibia. What about you Darrel?" Darrel slightly looked away with a yes and no kind of look. "Not exactly," he replied. "I almost ate a very toxic fruit that could've left me brain dead."

Tint nodded, "He's right. There was also the time he was practicing fire magic. He nearly set the roof on fire." The Plantars laughed,

"That's not all bad," said Sprig. "Anne barely survived."

"Yeah, there was that time she was looking at her phone and she walked right into a pool of quicksand." "Guess that's what happens when you fix your face onto a screen," said Darrel. "Or when she was napping outside and a swarm of skull suckers tried to carry her away?" Sprig asked.

"I don't remember that last part," said Anne. "Of course you don't Anne," said Darrel. "You were asleep. And besides, that was probably before we even teleported to Wartwood."

"Anne, we were always looking out for you," said Hop pop. "Even if you didn't always notice." Anne smiled, "Thanks guys, I had no idea. And I'll try to do better about easing you into this place." Just then, they hear a couple of voices outside.

"Darrel?" "It's us." Darrel looks out to see Jake and Ivan outside the dumpster. "You guys okay?" He asked. "Yeah," said Ivan. "But I think it's time you told us what's going on." "We overheard what Anne said about Amphibia. What is that place?"

Darrel looks to Tint who nods again. This time with confidence. "Okay, guys. My new friends here are not what they seem." He points to Tint who takes off his mask and his headphones revealing his salamander head.

Jake and Ivan gasped, "Is that?" "An anthropomorphic salamander?!" Darrel nodded, "Yep, I was stuck in Amphibia, his homeworld, for nearly six months. But so were Anne, Sasha, and... Marcy. And we need help getting the Plantars back home."

Ivan and Jake look at them with shock, the fact that they're asked to help beings from another world was so much to bear for the lives of only two humans and their families. But their shock slowly turned to excitement.

"Of course we'll help you," said Jake. "This is the most exciting thing I've heard in all my life." "So, what can we do to help?" Ivan asked. Darrel and Anne smiled. "You sure we can trust them?" Anne asked. "Of course," replied Darrel. "As long as they promise not to tell anyone else."

Jake and Ivan nodded, "We promise, this never leaves the vault." Darrel smiled knowing that they've got more allies on their side. Sure it's not a lot of people, but one small step at a time is all they need.

Sprig looked at Hop pop and said, "I think we need to get Hop pop to a shower." Hop pop and the others perk at his sight. "Oh yes please," he said. "My skin is burning." Darrel grinned, "You better believe it ain't easy being green." The group of friends laugh it off and they proceed to get Hop pop back to the Boonchuy's house.

Happy New Year Everyone! Is what I will say when the clock strikes midnight. Hahahaha. But yeah, I'm back writing on this story. Sorry I took so long with the writing. But being it was the holidays and all, I couldn't focus on this. And with New Years coming up, I've come to a new resolution. You'll just have to wait and see.

Enter Thai Go!

Chapter 48 - Enter Thai Go!

After returning Hop pop and his grandchildren to the Boonchuy's residence, Darrel and his family return home as well. The family was aware that the Plantars were in the mall, considering the amount of attention that was brought onto them. Darrel was grateful that his family was okay.

While on the road back to the house, Darrel asked his sisters. "So what did you guys get?" "We got pizza at the food court," said Jane. "Then we went to the Fitness Academy for gear and accessories. Gotta make ourselves stand out in front of everyone."

"So what happened at the mall?" Amelia asked. "The Plantars got into some trouble, so I had to help them out." "Aw, that sucks that we didn't get to help," said Jane. "But at least we weren't stuck at home waiting for something like this."

As they got back home, Darrel went up to his room, and Tint followed him. "I'm so glad we were able to get help," said Tint. "Me too, Tint," said Darrel. "Me too. I just thought that with everything going on, I believe things are going to be different. Both here, and in Amphibia." "Things are already different," said Tint. "Those things started at a time called 'yesterday'. Now, it is today. And it's what to do with tomorrow that's the question."

Darrel took his guitar and played on his strings. This time, it was a different melody. "What song is that?" Tint asked. "It's something called, The King's Lament," replied Darrel. "It's basically a melody that reflects on heartbreak, sorrow, grief, and remembrance." Tint sighed, "It's still getting to you isn't it?" Darrel nodded, "Yeah, I'm sorry for your loss."

"I didn't lose him," said Tint. "He was stolen from me. Andiras will not get away for what he's done. I swear that on my family's name, Andrias will pay." Darrel closes his eyes and gets a glimpse of Andiras standing over them laughing. Looking all innocent after everything he has done to him, Tint, Cronaxx, their family, and Marcy.

"Thank you for being in my life, Darrel," said Tint. "You're the only family I've got." Darrel opens his eyes and turns to him. "You're part of our family now," he said. "You're not alone and you never will be." Tint smiled, "Thanks Darrel." The two friends hug it out like the brothers they never had.

The very next day, Tint was up earlier than Darrel. He was talking to Jane and Amelia, telling them about his misadventures as an apprentice. They were so impressed that they wanted him to continue. Darrel wakes up, and finds Tint talking with his sisters.

"Sounds to me like you guys are getting along real well," said Darrel. "Yeah," said Tint. "I never knew having sisters could be this exciting." Darrel smirked, "They're something you can get used to."

Just then, Darrel's alarm clock goes off on his phone. The time is shown to be eight in the morning, only for Darrel to realize something he forgot while he was in Amphibia. "Eight o' clock!" he cried. "I'm running late! I forgot I still have a debt to pay at Thai Go!" Darrel races up the stairs, gets himself ready and makes his way to his bike.

His father and mother take notice of his rush against time. "I don't think it's that big of a deal if you're running late," said Matthew. "I'm sure Mr. and Mrs. Boonchuy will understand," said Sarah. "Perhaps," said Darrel. "But still, a man has to be responsible to pay for his own debts."

Darrel heads out the house and hops onto his bike. "Tint, look after the family until I get back," he said. "Family, keep an eye on Tint. Make sure he doesn't wander off." The family waved, "You got it

Darrel!" And with that, Darrel rides off to the Boonchuy's restaurant, Thai Go!

Darrel arrives just minutes before the Boonchuy's do. He was most surprised he actually made it before them. Shortly after, they arrived as well. "Darrel, what are you doing here?" Anne asked. "I still have a debt to pay, remember?" replied Darrel.

"Oh Darrel, you don't have to help us anymore," said Mr. Boonchuy. "You've returned our daughter home safe and sound." "As a matter of fact," said Mrs. Boonchuy, "If he finishes today's shift, he'll be officially debt free. Think you can handle one more day, Darrel?"

Darrel shrugged, "I don't see why not." Anne climbs out of the car. "Hey Darrel. Guess you're here for your debt," she said. "Only one more day," said Darrel. "Hey Darrel," said Sprig, climbing out after Anne. "Hey Sprig, what are you doing here?"

"He's been misbehaving at home," said Anne. "So he wanted to come and help to make up for what he's done." "Oh, okay," said Darrel. "Come along, kids," said Mrs. Boonchuy. "We've got a long day ahead of us." "Coming mom," said Anne.

The group entered the restaurant and prepared to open. Anne turns on the stoves, Mrs. Boonchuy prepares the food, Mr. Boonchuy prepares the dining room, and Darrel prepares the dishes and silverware.

Sprig jumped up and down, anticipated to help them out. He chants, "How can I help?" Mrs. Boonchuy didn't want Sprig to worry so much. "Don't worry about it, Pink Frog. You're our guest. Why don't you sit in a corner with a Thai iced tea."

Sprig takes the iced tea and sits down grunting to himself. Darrel takes notice and feels guilty. "Hey Sprig, come over here." Sprig perks up and hops his way to the dishwashing machine.

"You need help?" Sprig asked. "Nope," replied Darrel. "But I think you want to talk about something." Sprig sulks behind the dish counter. "It's just that I wanted to be a part of Anne's family. And Anne's mom is treating me like a guest."

Darrel was most surprised, especially with his relationship with Anne. He saw the childlike behavior in Sprig, longing for a mother figure in his life. Ever since he lost his parents, Hop pop was the only one that took care of him and Polly. The amount of time he spent without a mother figure made himself sad. And knowing that this may be his only chance to have a mother again, Sprig was willing to do anything it takes to be a part of the Boonchuy family.

Darrel patted on Sprig's head, "If that's what you think Sprig, then maybe you should talk to them. These kinds of things take time. But eventually, gain enough trust and generosity, and they'll gladly accept you." "Really?" Sprig asked. "Some things are well worth waiting for," replied Darrel. "Until then, stick with me."

Shortly after, a bell rings at the front door. "Oops, sounds like we got a customer," said Mrs. Boonchuy. "Better set up a table early, Darrel." "Yes, Mrs. Boonchuy," replied Darrel.

Darrel heads out in the dining room to prepare a spot for the customer. "What's happening Boonchuy's?" he asked.

This customer was obviously frequent to Thai Go. He is shown to be a full figured man with dark brown hair reaching down to his neck. A small stubble of hair with a small chin beard on his face. He is shown wearing a Romance Academy 7 shirt under an open flame t-shirt. He is also wearing brown khaki pants and sneakers.

"Woah, Anne!? I thought you were dead," he said. Anne and Darrel spot their local customer, smiling. "Ned!" Anne cried. Turns out that the customer's name was Ned.

Darrel smirked at Ned, expressing his unamused eyes at him. "Hello Nedry," he said. "Hello Darrel," said Ned blandly. "Still alive and

working here I see?" "Not for long, Nedry," replied Darrel. "Today is my last day until I'm debt free."

Ned chuckled, "Maybe next time you'll think twice about breaking my record. And maybe, you'll be able to pay for your food for once." Darrel shook his head smiling, "Look Nedry, I'm on the clock so I'm gonna do my job."

As Darrel goes to set the table, Sprig walks out to see Ned. "Check it out, Sprig. This guy's our number one customer. He's been around for years." Sprig gazed at the photos Anne points at. Turns out Anne was right, Ned has been around Thai go since Anne was a kid.

"And I'm not just a customer anymore Anne," said Ned. "I bought a food truck!" Darrel and Anne were surprised. "I want to bring your mom's amazing cooking to all of LA. She puts the pow in pad kra pao!" Ned pumps his fists, adding a dramatic flare to his idea.

"Oh neat," said Anne. "You guys are in business together?" Ned puts his hand behind his back and looks away nervously. "Well, no. Not yet."

Mrs. Boonchuy groaned and pinched her nose. "I already told you, we're just not interested in a food truck." "But you got the best Thai food in the county," said Nedry. "And if we partnered up, we could make so much money together. Couldn't you just share some of your recipes with me?"

"Absolutely not," said Mrs. Boonchuy. "These recipes are for family only." Ned groans, but then smiles, "When you change your mind, you know where to find me." He steps out of Thai Go and climbs back into his truck.

"Wow," said Anne. "He's literally parked right outside the restaurant." "Even I know a food truck parked right next to a restaurant is bad for business," said Darrel. "It is," said Mrs. Boonchuy. "Customers are very confused right now."

And right on cue, a customer looks at the sign, Thai Go. But then turns his head to the food truck that says Thai on the Go. Not knowing which is the real deal, makes the customer groan and shake in confusion. "What do I do?!" he cried as he fell to his knees.

"How long has this been going on?" Darrel asked. "It's been weeks," replied Mrs. Boonchuy. "And he still hasn't budged. Oh well, I better start the khao pad."

Mrs. Boonchuy walks back to the kitchen, leaving the three friends at the front desk. Darrel sighed, "I can't believe he's still holding on the fact I tried to beat his record. And that was months ago." "Hey," said Anne. "Maybe he'll feel better if you just let him have his thing. You don't need to beat his record to impress me, you know."

Anne and Darrel smile as she lays her hand on his. "I thought I was trying to impress Sasha at that time," said Darrel. "She looked convinced before I got the bill." Anne laughed at his statement. "Don't worry about that so much anymore. After tomorrow, you'll never have to work here again."

While the two were talking, Sprig was watching Ned's food truck outside and said, "Tough problem with Ned, huh? Why if someone were to solve it, your mom might consider him the son she never had."

Realizing where he was going with this, Anne and Darrel stop him in his tracks. "Sprig, stay out of this." "Okay okay, sheesh It was just a thought," said Sprig. "I mean it Sprig," said Darrel. "This is one of those things you don't understand. Heed my warning, Just leave it alone."

As time went on, Darrel was working hard on the dishes. He never felt so relieved to be smelling the scent of fresh soap. Mr and Mrs Boonchuy were most pleased with how he's handling his job. "Hey honey, can we talk?" Mr. Boonchuy asked. "Of course dear," she replied. "What about?"

They leave the kitchen as Darrel enters the dining hall to pick up plates. But as he was cleaning up a table, he spots Sprig making a ruckus. Anne takes notice as well. Sprig chants, "Morons! Morons!" as he was being dragged back into the restaurant by Anne and Darrel.

"Oh hey kids," said Ned. "While you're in there, could you grab those recipes?" Anne closes the door, and Darrel sets Sprig on the counter.

"Are you kidding me right now, Sprig?!" Darrel yelled. "I swear, If Mrs. Boonchuy caught you, Anne would get in trouble." "Wait, why would Anne get in trouble for something I did?" Sprig asked.

"Because mom doesn't yell at guests," replied Anne. "She only yells at family." Hearing that statement made Sprig feel sad and upset. "Ouch Anne, thanks for rubbing it in." Darrel gets up in his face. "You could've been caught, Sprig. Exposing yourself and your family. You wouldn't be safe anymore. You need to be smarter than this. The rules on Earth are different from Amphibia."

Sprig was most upset, not realizing that Darrel was right. He was in a different world, and so was his family. One foolish act would get them caught and exposed to the human world. Bad things could happen to them. He looks down with guilt.

"Look Sprig," said Anne. "I know what you're doing here. And I get why. But please stop, or I'll be cleaning the bathrooms with a toothbrush for the rest of my life. Just knock it off, okay?"

Anne exits the dining hall and Sprig smirks, "Heh, knock it off? Or knock it on?" Just then, Darrel grabs him from behind. "Oh no you don't!" he cried. "You cannot be trusted to be on your own around here." He takes Sprig to the dishwashing machine. "That's why you're not leaving my sight."

Sprig made many attempts to leave the dishwashing area, but Darrel always got the upper hand. Eventually, Sprig was about to give up.

Until a voice was heard, "Darrel, could you come here please?" It was Mrs. Boonchuy. Darrel leaves the dishwashing area, and in a moment of weakness, he forgot to tell Sprig to stay in place.

Sprig sneaks away into Ned's food truck. Ned was dancing to the rhythm of music and cleaning his truck's floors. Sprig drops a note near Ned, gaining his attention. The note makes him smile with glee and he heads into the restaurant, leaving Sprig alone with his plan in place.

Anne exits the backdoor to take the garbage out of the restaurant. Suddenly, she spots Sprig in the food truck. "Oh no," she said.

Just as Darrel washed up and was about to meet with the Boonchuys, he hears the door to the restaurant open. He sighed, "Last minute customers." He enters the dining hall and finds Ned at the front desk. "Hey Darrel, is Mrs. Boonchuy in?"

Darrel was confused, "Nedry, why are you..more... happier than usual?" Darrel starts to put two and two together looking at his surroundings. He finds a note in Ned's hands, and a gleeful look on his face as if things were going so well. And to top it all off, he finds Sprig on the driver's seat of the food truck.

Darrel screamed for a second then said at a fast pace, "Mrs. Boonchuy's in the back, she'll be with you in just a moment!" He rushes out to the food truck before Sprig could touch anything.

Just as Sprig was about to touch the truck, Darrel and Anne stop him. "Sprig, get out of there NOW!" Darrel shouted. "What are you doing in there?" Anne asked. "Squirmying my way into your mom's heart by making this food truck disappear!" Sprig claimed.

"Oh no you don't!" said Darrel. He jumps in and tackles Sprig to the ground. Anne climbs in after him to help him pin Sprig. Their pushing and shoving inadvertently caused Sprig to hit the gearshift. The food truck is set on neutral and starts rolling down the road with them inside.

The three kept on shoving and pushing until they felt a bump in the truck. They look up to see that they're moving. "Holy Crabapples!" Anne cried. "We gotta stop this truck!" Darrel screamed.

Anne takes the wheel, but Darrel was hesitant. "Anne, you can't drive!" He yelled. "True," said Anne. "But I have driven Bessie and played nine hundred hours of Super Warriors Karts." "That was a video game, Anne!" Darrel said. "This is real life!"

"Anne, look out!" Sprig cried. Anne swerves back onto the road without hitting the tree. "Use the brakes!" Darrel shouted. "Use the breaks!" Anne hits the brakes pedal, but nothing happens. They continue to speed down the road.

"Why isn't it working?!" Anne cried. Darrel looks up to see a note that says, 'Ned you rascal, don't forget to fix the brakes! - Ned.' Darrel growls, "Dang it, NED!"

The trio continue to rush down the hill, hitting a few obstacles along the way. After passing a sign that leads them to a skate park, Darrel comes up with an idea. "Guys! New plan. Sprig, I'm gonna need you to use that tongue to make a hard left." "Got it," said Sprig.

The food truck comes at the turn, and Sprig uses his tongue as instructed. His tongue wraps around a lamp post and the food truck turns left without tipping over. They drive into the skate park where they use the ramps and rails to slow the truck down. And finally, after jumping one more ramp, the truck comes to a complete stop. With broken glass and tires flat to prevent anymore rolling.

The trio sigh in relief. "I don't believe it," said Anne. "We did it!" Sprig cheered. "We're not out of the woods yet, Sprig," said Darrel. "Why not?" Sprig asked. The doors at the back of the truck open, revealing an angry Mrs. Boonchuy and Ned. "That's why not," said Darrel.

"I don't believe this," said Mrs. Boonchuy. She was not happy and neither was Ned. "Me either. You sent your daughter and coworker to destroy my truck? What are you people, insane?!"

Sprig hops out to confess. "Anne and Darrel have nothing to do with this. This was all me." He looks up to a disappointed Mrs. Boonchuy. He takes off his hat and looks down. "I just wanted to be a part of the family. But I should've respected your boundaries instead of pestering you with something you didn't want."

Mrs. Boonchuy approaches Sprig and takes a knee. "It's okay Pink Frog... I mean Sprig. I know how much you mean to my daughter. And how much she means to you. I probably shouldn't have treated you like such an outsider."

Darrel and Anne climb out of the food truck and hear everything. They smile just as Ned starts crying. "I feel like an outsider too! I love your restaurant so much! I just wanted to be part of it. But I was wrong! I'm so sorry. I'm done trying to get your recipes. I just realized, this is a gross appropriation of your culture and I should just show myself out."

Then, Darrel got an idea. He walks over to Mrs. Boonchuy and whispers it to her. She nods in agreement and stops Ned. "Ned, look. I can't give you the recipes because they are for family only. But, we could use some help with deliveries."

Ned picks himself up hearing Mrs. Boonchuy asked for his services. "I mean it won't pay much," she said. "But you'll be part of the restaurant."

Ned shakes her hand in acceptance with the job. "Yes I'd love to. You'll not regret it Mrs. Boonchuy. Not for a second. Thank you!" "Actually, you should thank Darrel, he suggested the idea of delivering our food."

Darrel nodded, "After all, you're their number one customer." "That's very nice of you Darrel," said Ned. "So, are we good?" Ned and Darrel shake hands. "Of course, Darrel. And don't worry about not beating my record, it takes a lot of training and practice." "I have a better understanding now, Nedry," said Darrel.

Ned climbs into his truck and takes off to start a new opportunity for Thai Go. Leaving Anne, Darrel, Sprig, and Mrs. Boonchuy in the skate park.

"Darrel," said Mrs. Boonchuy. "I have something I want to give you." Darrel stepped up and simply said, "Okay." Mrs. Boonchuy smiled, "For all your hard work, and for bringing my daughter back safely to us. It is my great pleasure to declare you debt free. You are free to go."

Mrs. Boonchuy gives Darrel a form that says 'Debt Paid' making Darrel smile. "WOO HOO! I'm free!"

"Well, I guess we're all done here," said Sprig. However, he wasn't off the hook. Mrs. Boonchuy grabs his coat and pulls him up from the ground. "Not so fast," she said in an angry tone.

"If you think you're getting out of here without an earful, you've got another thing coming! Firstly, how dare you disobey me! Secondly, how dare you put Anne, Darrel, and yourself in danger. Thirdly, why are you smiling?"

Mrs. Boonchuy was confused. Sprig was crying tears of joy. Now that he's being scolded by a mother, it means he's not being treated like an outsider to the Boonchuys. "You're scolding me," said Sprig. "Which means..."

"Yep," said Anne. "You're family now bud." "This calls for a celebration!" Darrel cheered. As Darrel was getting jiggy with his victory dance, Sprig was hugging his mother figure. Mrs. Boonchuy was staring into the open with unease. "Already having second thoughts about this."

Darrel takes his bike back to his house after a long day of work. "Tint! Girls! Mom and Dad! I'm back, and I'm debt free!" He enters the living room and yelps at the sight of Tint in makeup and a dress.

Darrel smirked and laughed a bit. "Your sisters did this to me," said Tint in an unamused tone. "Welcome to a life with sisters," said Darrel. "Don't worry buddy, they only do that to new friends." Darrel takes Tint to the bathroom to clean up.

Teeth For Two

Chapter 49 - Teeth for Two

Another day on the planet Earth brings new opportunities for our group of humans and amphibians. So while Anne and Darrel find other ways of getting the Plantars and Tint back to Amphibia, they choose to relax for the day. Which did not sit well with Anne or Darrel.

In Anne's backyard, Hop pop was taking it easy on the lounge chair. Sprig and Tint were passing a soccer ball to each other. Polly was laying right beside Hop pop on a pillow, drinking lemonade. Anne was reading science magazines on how to open dimensional portals to other worlds. Darrel however, laid his head on his hand, feeling bored out of his mind. Watching Anne read magazines didn't feel like it was progress.

"Really, Science Mag Monthly?" Anne asked. "Not one article about interdimensional portals?" Anne slams her hands into her face. "There's absolutely nothing. What science do you even do?" She slams the magazine off the table and onto the ground. The pages opened show articles about diarrhea being cured and world hunger being solved.

Darrel rubbed his temple with his index finger and thumb. "Anne, we're not getting anywhere with this." "What are you talking about, Darrel?" Darrel stands up from his chair and keeps a firm grip on the table. "We're trying to get the answer to our problem from a magazine!"

Darrel takes one of the magazines from the pile and shows the publisher to her. "Most of these magazines are made by journalists, not scientists. They tend to write what they believe is true." He puts the magazine down and sighs.

"Relax kids," said Hop pop while taking a sip of lemonade. "We'll find a way back. Eventually." Mr. Boonchuy refills Hop pop's lemonade. Hop pop felt flattered, "Oh you don't have to do that," said Hop pop.

Mr. Boonchuy was still pleased with the Plantars. "Please, you're our guests." Suddenly, an alarm was going off in the kitchen. "Uh, Mr. Boonchuy," said Darrel. "I think something is burning." The alarm that was beeping was the smoke detector. And Mr. Boonchuy knew what was the problem. "My canapes!"

He rushes into the kitchen to save the house. "I'm telling you Anne, we need reliable sources if we're to get them back home," said Darrel. "Where can we get more information?" Anne asked.

Darrel smirked, making Anne realize what he's talking about. "Oh no. No no no no. Don't tell me you're thinking about going to... The Library!" Darrel nods his head yes. "Look Anne, if I know anything about dimensional travels. I would take it from the words of scientists. And most of their facts are written in books at the library."

Then, Darrel looks down with a glum look on his face. "And besides, Marcy told me she was going there, on your birthday. And if she found out about the box there, then there may be information on other ways to travel to different dimensions."

Anne looks to Darrel with a sad look. Mentioning Marcy may have been tough to hear from him. The two didn't even notice that Darrel's staff started to fade slowly from its color.

Hop pop however, was looking on the bright side of things. "Whew, I haven't been this pampered in ages." "Here here," said Polly as she slaps her feet a couple times. "Enjoy it now kids. You know the old saying, 'Guests are like noxious swamp gas.' After three days, they start to drive you crazy". We've already been here two days, pretty soon we'll have to start pulling our own weight."

"Actually Hop pop," said Tint. "We've been here for a week now." That statement made Hop pop and Polly spit out their lemonade.

"That means we're not guests anymore," he said. "We're Freeloaders! Just like Cousin Stanley!" Hop pop, Sprig, and Polly started to grow weary, and guilty. Only Tint, Darrel and Anne were confused.

"Okay, I'll bite," said Darrel. "Who's cousin Stanley?" "He was the worst!" Polly replied. "He stayed in our home forever," said Hop pop. "Ate all our snacks," said Sprig. "Even used my bucket as a foot bath," said Polly.

"I don't even think he was really our cousin," said Sprig. "I saw him painting himself in our bathroom." "But we were hosts," said Hop pop. "So we had to be nice. We just resented him a little more. Each passing day, it was very hard."

"Must've been rough," said Tint. "So how'd you get rid of him?" "Thankfully he left peacefully on his own," said Hop pop. "Really?" Anne asked. "Nah," said Sprig. "We threw him out the window." Darrel whistles in shock and awe. "Who'd have thought a host could take so much?"

"Exactly," said Hop pop. "And I can only imagine what the Boonchuys would want to do to us by now." "Relax, Hop pop," said Tint. "Let's try not to go overboard on this subject. I mean, I asked the Loyalitat's about this before. They told me that I've done more than enough for them. I kept an eye out on Darrel when they couldn't, even made sure he's back in one piece."

Darrel nodded, "It's true. So if my family can tolerate Tint, the Boonchuys can tolerate you." Hop pop was still unsure. "Be that as it may, we still gotta do something for them for the time being."

Just then, Mrs. Boonchuy enters the backyard. "Hey Anne, it's time for your dentist appointment. And Darrel, since your appointment is today as well, I promised your mother I would take you there."

"Dental appointment?" "My what?" Darrel was confused, while Anne felt annoyed. "You both have been missing for five months," said

Mrs. Boonchuy. "And I have a feeling you both haven't been brushing."

Darrel places his hand on his jaw, realizing the situation. "You may have a point, Mrs. Boonchuy," he said. "And I doubt the frogs in Amphibia ever heard of toothpaste." Anne wouldn't have it, "But Mom. I was supposed to take Domino to the vet today."

"Maybe your father can take her," said Mrs. Boonchuy. However, Mr. Boonchuy had other plans, "No can do. I'm working at the restaurant today." It was a bummer for Anne. She couldn't get her mom or her dad to take her pet cat to the vet. The two parents tried to think of something, until Darrel came up with an idea.

"If I could make a suggestion," he said. "Why don't you let Tint and the Plantars take her for you?" "That's a good idea, Darrel," said Hop pop. "We'll gladly take the cat to the vet." "Really?" Mrs. Boonchuy asked. "Are you sure?"

"Yeah, I'm sure," said Hop pop. "It's the least we can do to help." Anne rushes over to hug the amphibians. "You guys are lifesavers," she said. She gives them a list of instructions and the address to the vet. "If anyone suspects anything different about you, just say, 'Boy, I could use some coffee.' It's like a code for 'I'm human.'"

Mrs. Boonchuy escorts the two teens to her car as she wishes them good luck. Before they can enter the car, Anne tries to assure her mom that she's okay. "Mom please, my teeth only hurt a little bit." Darrel would hear nothing of it. "Anne, if my teeth hurt a little bit then something must be wrong. And if I can swallow my pride just for one day so should you."

The two enter the car and Mrs. Boonchuy takes the wheel. "You know, you should listen to your friend Anne," she said. "It sounds like he's well sure of himself." Darrel nods, "You have no idea what I've been through, Mrs. Boonchuy."

"But Darrel, you always get so twitchy when they hit the sensitive parts on your mouth," said Anne. "Aren't you at least concerned about that?" Darrel sighed, "Of course I am, Anne. But if I don't get my teeth fixed, they're going to fall out. And if that happens, I'll be forced to wear dentures for the rest of my life. And I don't want that."

"Ugh! You can be so upsetting sometime," said Anne. Darrel smirked, "Yeah, I know." Mrs. Boonchuy smirked at the two. She looked at them and it reminded her of the petty arguments she had with her husband. So she decided to joke around. "Hmm, if I didn't know better, it sounded like you two are like an old married couple."

That comment made them stand up straight, rub their heads or look away from each other. "Oh come on mom," said Anne. "That's ridiculous." "We're not married," said Darrel. Mrs. Boonchuy soon chuckled. "Come on kids, I was only joking. Besides, I still know that you're with Sasha, Darrel. I hope that wherever she is, she'll be fine."

That statement made Darrel freeze in place. He almost forgot that he had broken up with Sasha long ago. And now that he's with Anne, and Mrs. Boonchuy doesn't know, this scared him out of his life. He's in the car of his girlfriend's unsuspecting mom. And if she were to find out that he's currently dating her, she would go crazy.

This led to Darrel quietly texting Anne in secret, 'She doesn't know?' Anne gets his message, but he points to her mother quietly. Anne texts, 'OMG I totally forgot she still knows you're with Sasha.' The two go back and forth with text messages.

'How do we tell your parents?' 'We need to find the right moment,' 'Okay, when's that?' 'IDK,' 'Well we better tell our families soon.' The two texted with their phones for the rest of the trip. Mrs. Boonchuy was a tad curious of who they were texting, but she remained focused on driving them to the dentist.

Back at the Boonchuy house, the Plantars and Tint were staring at a sleeping Domino with a ball of yarn in her paws. Tint smiled at the

cute cat, but Sprig was a little uneasy with handling her. "I'm having Domino 2 flashbacks right about now."

"Enough talk!" Polly exclaimed. "Seize the beast!" But as Polly was about to jump down, Tint grabbed her before she could hit the cat. "That's not going to make things easy," he said. "I've tamed a lot of creatures in my training, so this should be a new challenge for me."

Tint takes Polly over to Hop pop and he gently strokes Domino's head. "Hey Domino, wakey wakey," he whispered. This got Domino to wake up and stretch her claws out. "Okay, Hop pop open up the cat carrier. And I'll try to get her inside."

At the dentist office, Mrs. Boonchuy, Anne, and Darrel arrive in the waiting room. Inside sat Darrel's mom, Sarah. "Mom. What are you doing here?" Darrel asked. "Your name is under my insurance," replied Sarah. "Of course I had to be here."

"Sarah, so good to see you out of the hospital," said Mrs. Boonchuy. The two mothers greeted each other with a small hug. "So glad to see Anne's back safe and sound," said Sarah. "Well, it's a little early until their appointment. So we should wait."

Anne groaned, "Uuuugh! Why?! The waiting is so boring." Darrel simply shrugged her complaint and sat down. "If I can wait, then maybe you can too." Sarah smirked, "You should listen to my son more. He knows what to do in times like this." Anne slouches and sits next to Darrel.

Back at the Plantars and Tint, they are shown to be thrown off the bus with Domino in their hands. After the bus started moving, Hop pop inadvertently slapped the passengers with his tongue trying to grip the seats. "Well that went well," said Polly. "So what do we do now?" Tint asked.

Sprig had an idea, "Maybe Mr. Boonchuy can give us a ride." He takes out the pocket phone and opens it up to dial. However, Hop pop takes it out of his hands. "Absolutely not. We're not asking for

any more favors." "But Hop pop," said Tint. "It's not a favor, it's assistance. And besides, we don't know much about this city."

Hop pop just shrugged it off, "Nonsense, Tint. We just need to focus up and get this job done." Tint sighs in defeat, until he finds a loophole. Then, he takes out another pocket phone and makes a call while Hop pop's not looking.

Back at the dentist, the assistant came out and called for Darrel and Anne. "See you after the appointment," said Darrel. Sarah nods at her son in approval. 'Hope it's not too bad,' he thought. Anne was a little skeptical, but Darrel reached out his hand to her. "We'll go together," he said. Anne smiles, takes his hand and follows him in until they split into different offices.

Darrel sits in the chair and looks at his surroundings. All he could think about was how bad his teeth have been since he was in Amphibia. Then, his dentist arrived on the scene. His dentist had a clean haircut, wore glasses and a proper dental uniform. Darrel recognized him right away.

"Dr. Enamel?" "Hey Darrel, my favorite patient," he said. "When I heard you were missing I was so worried." Darrel smiled, "I have that impact on a lot of people." "Well good thing you're just in time for your check up from six months ago," said Dr. Enamel.

He gets his equipment all set up ready to check on Darrel's teeth. "So where were you all this time?" he asked. "Believe it or not, I was in a place that's never heard of toothpaste," replied Darrel. "Eeeh, Waka Waka," said Dr. Enamel. The two laughed at his catchphrase.

"But seriously, the place where I've been has never heard of toothpaste," said Darrel. "Well then, let's take a gander and see if you're right." Darrel opens his mouth and Dr. Enamel gets to work.

Meanwhile, the Plantars and Tint continue their journey to the vet. They face many obstacles along the way. Including scooter gangs, hilltops, even regular sized herons, a frog's natural predator. But

despite all the hardships, they make it to the vet clinic's office. Tint secretly sends a message on the phone and enters behind the Plantars.

Just as they enter the clinic, Matthew, Amelia, and Jane are parked outside. "So what are we doing?" Jane asked. "We're just waiting in case things go south for our friends," replied Matthew. "This is so exciting," said Amelia.

Back at the dentist's office, Dr. Enamel was finished checking on Darrel's teeth. Darrel had a few good grips on the arms of the chair when the tools touched near his tooth and gums. Dr. Enamel was shocked, "Oh boy." He walks over to the sink to wash his hands.

"What is it?" Darrel asked. "It's nothing I can't fix," replied the doctor. "Well I guessed that," said Darrel.

"You've got around seven cavities, plus a lot of cricket legs," said Dr. Enamel. Darrel was shocked. He hasn't gotten any cavities before, and this is one of those situations where he has to get them filled. Darrel grew anxious, he didn't want to feel more pain in his mouth.

"But after I consult with your mother, I can fill them up in no time." Dr. Enamel leaves to talk with his mother, leaving Darrel all alone. He takes sharp deep breaths. 'Oh dear,' he thought. 'This is going to take a while.'

Suddenly, he hears Anne struggling and screaming when she was at her check up. Her screams were not making Darrel feel any better. He takes a long look around the dental office until a gust of wind blows on his head.

He looks to the window to see it was closed. His curiosity overcomes his anxiety about his cavities. He starts to hear a whisper, 'Darrel. Darrel. Stay focused, stay calm, you'll do fine.' "Who's there?" Darrel asked.

"Did you say something, sport?" Dr Enamel asked. Darrel looks over to see Dr Enamel arrive with a tray of tools and serum for the procedure. "I thought I heard someone whispering to me," replied Darrel. "Well it wasn't me, champ. Anyway, let's get started," said Dr Enamel. "I've got the go ahead from your mother so this should only take a while."

Darrel takes the whispers he hears to heart and opens wide for his dentist to work. As Dr Enamel started the procedure, a small tint of blue light was shown outside of the window. Then, it faded into the sky.

Tint and the Plantars left the vets in a hurry. Thankfully, they were able to get Domino checked up. But as they left the clinic, Domino's cage was opened and Domino climbed out. Domino jumps out of the window, only for Jane and Amelia to catch her in the act.

As the amphibians head back to Anne's, Tint gets a call from the Loyalitats. "Hello?" Tint answered. "Tint, it's Jane. Did you know that Domino got out of her cage?" said Jane. "She what!?" The group looks to see the carrier empty, without a cat.

"We've lost her!" Sprig cried. "We've lost Domino! Anne's going to be devastated!" "Where is she?" Tint asked Jane. "She's with us," Jane replied. "Just come back to the clinic and we'll pick you up."

"We're on our way," said Tint. "The Loyalitat's got Domino. We can head back, they'll give us a lift." Hop pop just stood in shock and awe. "You've called for help behind my back?!" "I had to," said Tint. "We would've been lost. Nobody does anything without help, Hop pop. They open doors for me. And I've worked hard to open doors for them. It doesn't make you anything less to walk through." And with that, the Plantars and Tint return to the vet.

They make it back to find Jane and Amelia playing with Domino in the car. They take their seats and find Mr. Boonchuy in the car. "Mr. Boonchuy what are you doing here?" Hop pop asked. "After I called

Darrel's family, I asked them to bring him along so we can explain to him why you wanted to take Domino to the vet," replied Tint.

"Matthew told me everything," said Mr Boonchuy. "And no matter what, I'll always be grateful. You frogs took my daughter in, when she needed it most. You kept her fed, and safe for five months, just out of the kindness of your heart. You don't owe us anything, ever."

Mr. Boonchuy smiled at the Plantars, just as their eyes started to swell with tears. "Wow," said Hop pop. "I don't know what to say. Thank you." "Are you kidding me," said Mr Boonchuy. "Thank you." And with that, the group drives off back to the Boonchuy house.

Moments after Mr Boonchuy closed the restaurant for the day, he, Matthew, Jane, Amelia, Tint, and the Plantars were hanging out in the living room. The door from the garage opened and Mrs Boonchuy and Sarah returned with Anne and Darrel. Their cheeks were so swollen, their jaws were wrapped with cloth, and their eyes were more dilated than usual.

"Anne, Darrel, you're back," said Sprig. "Everything went great with Domino." However, Anne and Darrel were so numb they couldn't think straight. "You guys are EVERYWHERE, okay," said Anne. Darrel sniffed and said, "I can smell the color blue."

"So how was it?" Matthew asked. "So many cavities," said Mrs Boonchuy. "Plus a whole lot of cricket legs." "But, not bad for Darrel's first cavity filling," said Sarah. "He just remained seated like he was being guided."

"Ooh, cricket legs," said Hop pop. "Did you save us any?" Anne grabs Hop pop's cheeks and said, "Listen, Domino's not just a cat. She's the Alpha and Omega; an interdimensional being beyond all time and space." Hop pop was confused.

"Hey, do you guys mind if you keep them occupied for a bit?" Mr Boonchuy asked. "Why don't you stay with them too Jane? Amelia?" The two sisters nodded, "Sure." "Thanks, that'd be super helpful."

"Hold up!" Darrel said in a dazed tone. "Anne and me likey, we likey a lot." Darrel chuckled, making both mothers a tad confused. "Huh?" Anne smiled and went up to nuzzle Darrel's face. "Darrel is like cute sweet rice pudding," said Anne. This caused them to break up the two. "Okay, you two need to rest," said Mrs Boonchuy. "Jane, Amelia, please make sure that they don't do anything foolish," said Sarah.

"Yes Mom," said Amelia. And then, the parents rush off. "Darrel and I are one with the universe," said Anne. "Tint," said Darrel. "I heard a whisper at the dentist. It almost sounded like Cronaxx's voice." This made Tint perk up with shock. "What? What did you say?" Darrel just chuckled until he collapsed on the couch. "And, he's out," said Jane.

"This is very strange," said Amelia. "I thought Sasha and Darrel were together." "It must be the anesthesia talking," said Tint in a glum realistic tone. "I wonder," said Jane.

Artifacts of Ancient Times

Chapter 50 - Artifacts of Ancient Times

Los Angeles, a city of wonder in California. By day, it's a wonderful time to enjoy the sights, the landmarks, the beaches. By night, it's still wonderful to hear the sounds, see the lights, and take in the after hours when people start to go to sleep. Today, in the suburbs, our heroes are enjoying the peace and quiet of the night. Well, almost everyone.

At the Loyalitat household, in Darrel's room, there were up to five library books on his desk. Most of them involved dimensional travel and multiple worlds from across the universe. But, Tint and Darrel were sleeping soundly in the living room with the rest of the family. Matthew and Sarah quietly turned off the television and let their kids sleep soundly.

At the Boonchuy's house, Hop pop, Sprig, and Polly were sound asleep. Sprig was on Anne's bean bag chair, Polly was sleeping in Domino's cat bed, and Hop pop was on Anne's bed. Anne, however, was still wide awake. Her eyes grew so dreary, looking at her computer screen all night.

She searched multiple sites on portals to other worlds, multiverse theories, even asked people on the internet for more information. Anne was determined on how to get her amphibian friends home, her human friends back to Los Angeles, and stop Andrias at the same time. Sounds like there's a lot to bear on their shoulders.

Night soon became morning and the two households started to wake up slowly. At the Loyalitat residence, Darrel was waking up from the couch he was sleeping on. He smiles to see Tint in between his two sisters. Then, he gets a whiff of something in the kitchen and gets up to find out what it is. Tint, Jane, and Amelia slowly wake up shortly after.

At the Boonchuy's house, Anne was still researching as the sun reached the sky. Then, her mother called to her, "Anne, Breakfast." Anne was startled at her voice, she wanted to come down, but she still wanted to find other ways to get her friends home.

She looked at the site that she was currently on and smirked, "I'll just hit send real q-" "NOW!" Her mom shouted. Anne jumped again before she could hit send and jumped out of her bed. "Yep, okay, okay."

Turning back to the Loyallat house, Darrel, his family, and Tint were having breakfast. "So how's that research coming along, Darrel?" Amelia asked. Darrel frowned and shook his head. "No good so far," he replied. "Even the library didn't have much to go on."

"Maybe it's because the calamity box is a combination of both technology and magic," said Tint. "Can't you make another one?" Jane asked. "The stones on the box are magical and are hard to come by," replied Tint. "You can't just find more of them anywhere else. Besides, Uncle Cronaxx was the only one who knew how to make that box."

"And when he found out about Andrias' true intentions, he destroyed all traces of his work. So he can't make another one if the box is destroyed," said Darrel. "I guess the only way of getting Tint and the Platars back, is the calamity box itself." "But how are you going to get it if Andrias has it?" Amelia asked. "I wish I knew," said Darrel.

"Well, I'm sure you'll find a way," said Sarah. "You always do." Darrel smiled as he finished his breakfast. "So what are you going to do now?" Jane asked. "I think I'm just going to take a break from research," said Darrel. "I'll take the books back to the library and decide what to do from here."

"If I could make a suggestion," said Matthew. "You could research something else. You missed five months of school, and I know you don't want to repeat the seventh grade." Darrel blushed in

embarrassment, "Oh yeah, okay, I can do that. I'm not flunking school, no matter how much I've learned in Amphibia."

"You can't teach an old dog new tricks, unless the dog teaches itself," said Amelia as she spun her basketball. "Amelia, no ball spinning in the house," said Sarah. "Sorry Ma," said Amelia.

Back at the Boonchuy house, the Plantars were watching a movie while eating cereal. Anne comes in with a bowl of cereal, looking very tired from researching all night.

Anne groans from exhaustion grabbing her friends' attention. "Woah, someone didn't sleep," said Sprig. "Nope," said Anne. "I've spent all night researching ways to get you guys home. And possibly the night before that."

Anne's mother sits next to her on the arm of the couch. "You? Researching? Who are you and what have you done with my daughter?" "Har Har," said Anne in an unamused tone. "So I was thinking, what if there was a second Calamity box, here on Earth? So I mapped out every thrift store in a fifty mile radius-"

"Anne, I'm gonna stop you right there," said Polly. "You heard what Cronaxx said, he created only one Calamity Box." "Polly's right, Anne," said Sprig. "Besides, Primistle Manor isn't going to binge itself."

"Everyone quiet!" cried Hop pop. "Lord Frankerton's confessing his love for Lady Franklin."

"My dearest Lady Franklin," said Frankerton. "I simply cannot contain my passion for you any longer." He closes his eyes and blushes at his confession. "Oh Lord Frankerton," said Franklin. The two touch hands and the screen displays a love banner.

The Plantars gasped. "And it only took three seasons," cried Sprig. Anne sighted, "Why does it feel like I'm the only one trying to find a

way back to Amphibia?" "Anne, we have been trying," said Sprig. "But, it's okay to take a day off to recharge every now and then."

"There's no time you guys," said Anne. "Come on, let's get back to research."

Just then, Anne's mom turns off the television. "Since you seem to enjoy research so much now, what if you four spend the day at the museum and write a report. You have a lot of makeup schoolwork to do."

She points to Anne's untouched school textbooks and daily planner, covered with dirt and cobwebs. Being gone for five months made her books feel like a display of art.

The four groan, being upset with the idea. "Ohh, do we have to?" Mrs Boonchuy was firm with her suggestion. "Yes. I'm also cleaning the house, there's slime everywhere, and I am not pointing fingers. But I need you all out of the way.

She wasn't kidding when she said there was slime in the house. There were slime patches coming from everywhere in the living room. A drop of slime suddenly dropped on the living room rug. "Gross Anne," said Polly.

Meanwhile, outside the streets of Los Angeles, the cloak-bot removed his camouflage and tried to scan for Anne and Darrel's locations. "Energy sensor: unresponsive," he said. His scanners were not working to their full extent. He scans the nearest cell phone tower and says, "Will attempt to hack into local frequencies."

Mrs Boonchuy takes Anne and the Plantars to the Museum of Natural History. Outside the museum stands a full scale model of the woolly mammoth. "I'll pick you up a six. Have fun, but also learn," she said as she opened the door. Anne and the Plantars climb out and Mrs Boonchuy drives away.

As they approach the front gates, they hear a familiar voice call out behind them. "Anne!" She turns around to see Darrel and Tint, then Jane and Amelia tackle her in excitement.

"Look out," he said. "Darrel. Girls, it's good to see you," said Anne. "We were so excited we got to join you guys this time," said Jane. "It may not be looking for a way home," said Amelia. "But it's still something."

"Wait, you know about our plans?" Anne asked. "I had to tell them that," said Darrel. "I missed them so much, and they wanted to help any way they could."

"So you guys are frogs?" Amelia asked. She touches Sprig's exposed frog skin and gets grossed out of the substance that catches on her fingers. "Eww, it's so slimy." "Actually, it's not slime," said Tint. "It's mucus." Darrel gives Amelia a disinfectant wipe and the group enter the museum.

The Plantars and Tint were amazed at the site of historical artifacts. "Woah, looks like you guys used to have a monster problem too," said Sprig as he pointed to a dinosaur sculpture. "They weren't our problem, Sprig," said Darrel. "Humans didn't exist during that time period."

Then, the group arrives at the solar system display. Jane twirled slowly with the planets. "The solar system is my favorite science topic," she said. "The planets spin around and around, just like me." The amphibians gaze at the planet Earth with delight. Anne yawns out of exhaustion, and Darrel smiles at their interest. "Wait," said Hop pop. "Your people think the world is round?" "Of course it's round, Hop pop," said Tint. "And so is Amphibia." "WHAT!?" Hop pop cried.

As Darrel and Tint enter the knights and armor exhibit, they turn to see a mage overlooking a cauldron. "So you have wizards in your history, too?" Tint asked. "If only they were real," said Darrel. "Most of these folks are doctors from the medieval times. Providing

medicine for the sick and the poor." "I like these guys, even if they're not all powerful."

That's when Jane and Amelia walk up to Darrel. "Hey Darrel, can we ask you something?" Amelia asked. "Sure, what is it?" he replied. "After your dentist appointment, you said some things that got us concerned." Darrel stopped in his tracks, scared about what he spilled about his adventures in Amphibia. "What did I say?" Darrel asked.

"You told us you like Anne. Like, really like her," said Jane. Darrel stood in shock as if a cannon blast went off in his head. "Is it true?" Jane asked. Knowing there's no going back, or hiding from here, Darrel took a knee and said, "Yes, it's true. I really like Anne."

Jane and Amelia were shocked. "But, what about Sasha?" Amelia asked. "The time I spent on Amphibia made me reflect on the choices I made," replied Darrel. "I realized that I've been there for Sasha, and she's done little for me. So I've decided that I don't want to stay with her anymore, to be who I want to be. Then, after spending time with Anne, having fun, I realized she and I have been through thick and thin since we were kids. So we've decided to give this a shot."

Jane and Amelia were touched by his story. "That's so sweet, Darrel," said Jane. "But do Mom and Dad know?" "Not yet, I want to tell them myself," replied Darrel. "And it would mean much to me if you didn't tell them. It has to come from me." Jane and Amelia nod in agreement, "Okay, but you have to tell them immediately." "Deal," said Darrel.

Polly walks over to the two cavemen displaying themselves hitting each other. "I like these guys, they get it." "See," said Hop pop. "We can have a fun one off just like we did in Amphibia." However, Hop pop was upset to see Anne who is looking on her laptop for more research on how to get them home.

"Anne! You gotta take a break from all this research," said Hop pop. Anne was startled at his outburst. "Don't worry HP," said Anne. "I'm fine, I'm fine." "Burning yourself out isn't going to help us get home to Amphibia," said Hop pop.

"Hey Anne! Plantars!" cried Darrel. "I think I've found something," Anne and the Plantars race over to find Darrel, Tint, and his sisters gazing at an antique pot. "Look at this," said Tint. He points to a picture gram of what looks like a group of vikings and a creature holding what looks like the Calamity Box, jumping from a swirling vortex.

"Call me crazy," said Sprig. "But that looks like.." "One of us," said Polly. "I have to agree with you on that one," said Darrel. "Could this be the clue we're looking for?" Anne asked.

Suddenly, a hand reached out to her shoulder and she freaked out. "Didn't expect to see frogs in here, eh?" Anne screamed, and Darrel was startled. "Woah, you surprised me," he said. The person standing before them was wearing a yellow shirt with dinosaur bones, a badge indicating she's an employee of the museum. She wears red glasses, ufo earrings, and her hair is bunched up in a messy ponytail.

"Oh, you were talking about the pot," said Anne. "Sure, whatcha think I was talking about," said the woman. "Name's Dr Jan. I'm a curator here, and an avid lover of all things ancient."

"Okay, Dr Jan," said Amelia. "What can you tell us about this pot here?" Dr Jan goes over to observe the pot. "Interesting isn't it? The frog here is depicted in a very unconventional bipedal. Oh! It must have been some kind of deity."

"Deity?" Darrel asked. "Possibly a frog shaped alien from another dimension, right?" That question made the Plantars and Anne sweat. "So sorry," said Dr Jan. "I'm really into cryptids. You know, UFO's and stuff. Anyway, you got any other questions?"

"Do you know anything about portals to-" Sprig tried to ask, but Anne covers his mouth to prevent asking any further. "Nope, not at all! Actually, I hate history. And museums, yuck."

"Now that wasn't nice," said Darrel. "I'm sorry Dr Jan, I'll make sure my friend here watches what she says." "Okay," she said. "Well if you have any more questions, just give me a holler and I'll fly in like an information superhero. Dr Jan away!"

Dr. Jan takes her leave, leaving the group to ponder over what just happened. "Hey, why'd you blow her off?" Sprig asked. "Maybe she knows something?" "What? Come on dude," said Anne. "We don't know anything about that lady. How do you know we can trust her?"

"Still," said Darrel. "It's not nice to just blurt out that you hate museums. That was kind of insulting." Ameilia smirked, "Yeah, Anne." "You should listen to your boyfriend more often," said Jane. "I'm not trying to-" Anne's face suddenly dropped when she heard the term boyfriend from his sister's mouth.

"Whaaa? Hahaha, no that's ridiculous. Your brother's not-" "Anne, give it up," said Darrel. "They know." "But how?" Anne asked. "When we were hopped up with whacky gas at the dentist. They're not stupid, Anne," replied Darrel.

"Well that pot is our first real clue," said Hop pop. "He's right," said Tint. "And if that thing's ancient, maybe there's a hidden message or a map somewhere on that artifact." "Tint's right," said Anne. "We gotta get a closer look without attracting attention." "Well if you don't want to ask that Dr Jan for help," said Hop pop. "What are we going to do? Rob the museum?"

Anne snaps her fingers, "That's it. Darrel, meet me at my place after dinner. Come alone." As she took the Plantars with her, she looked to Jane and Amelia for one more favor. "Think you could keep this thing between me and your brother a secret?" Anne asked. "Sure," said Amelia. "As long as Darrel tells our parents."

Anne and the Plantars leave the museum, leaving Darrel, his sisters and Tint behind. "So what are we going to do?" Jane asked. "Knowing Anne, she's up to some crazy scheme," said Darrel. "But I'm going to handle this the right way. Dr Jan!" Hearing her name being called, Dr Jan returns to the Loyalitats. "Yes? How can I help?" she asked.

Anne and the Plantars return home to come up with a plan, one Hop pop was sarcastic to hear. "I still can't believe we're robbing the museum." Anne wanted to keep this quiet from her parents, so she hushed the frogs.

"Anne," called her mother. "You guys okay in here?" Anne smiled in a suspicious way, "All good, just finishing that report." "Don't believe you," said her mother. "But okay," she squints her eyes as she closes the door to her room.

"Looks like she bought it," said Polly. Anne instantly falls asleep, until Sprig wakes her up again. "Huh? Where was I?" she asked. "We did way more dangerous stuff in Amphibia, at least nothing here's going to spit acid at us." "That you know of," said Polly.

"Come on guys," said Anne. "If you don't break a few rules for this, how are we ever going to get back?" The Plantars look at each other with unease. They want to get back home as much as possible, but not at the expense of breaking the laws in the human world. But knowing that there may be a clue on the artifact, they decided to take that chance.

"So, what's the plan?" Sprig asked. Anne grinned as she took out a few of her dark sweatshirts and gave them to her frog friends.

They arrive at the museum at the dead of night and initiate their plan. Hop pop dresses up like a cat and takes one of the security guard's shoes. At the front door, Anne launches Polly to get in the vents and open the door from the inside. Once inside, Sprig uses his frog skills and tongue to take out the cameras.

But little did they know, was that the Cloak-bot hacked the security camera footage and caught the little frog on screen. He took the image of Sprig from the security camera and compared it with an image of Anne and himself to obtain a perfect match. He pinpoints the location of the footage to the museum. "Target found," said the Cloak-bot.

Sprig returns from taking out the cameras, and Hop pop returns without the guards chasing him. "The guards got tired of chasing me and stopped at a coffee shop," he said. "We got a good twenty minutes."

But then, a shadowy figure swoops past them. "What was that?" Sprig asked. "We're not alone," said Polly in a sneaky tone. They turn to Anne who falls asleep again. "Anne, something else is in here," "Huh, what?" Anne says.

She looks at the figure who goes over to the exhibit where the pot is located. They race to the exhibit, and find the place filled with lasers. The figure is seen on the other side and removes the display case carefully.

"He's going after the pot!" Hop pop cried. "Not on my watch," said Polly. She races under the lasers, not being able to touch them. Then as the cloaked figure put the display case down, Polly bites him in the ankle.

"Ow! Polly, what gives?" The cloaked figure sounded very familiar. "Wait, Darrel? Is that you?" Anne asked. The figure removes the hood covering his face and reveals himself to be Darrel. "Of course it's me," he said. "Who else would be going after this vase?"

"What are you doing here?" Hop pop asked. "Are you here to steal the vase too?" Sprig asked. "No," replied Darrel. "I was asked by Dr Jan to get it so she could study it more."

Suddenly, a crash was heard from the glass roof above. The Cloak bot jumps in and surprises the group. He jumps in the path of the

lasers, turning on the alarm. "Not you again!" Anne cried. "Let's get out of here!" Darrel shouted.

The group runs away, grabbing the pot in the process. The Cloak bot chases them until he hears a whistle coming from behind. He turns to see Tint, Amelia, and Jane coming towards him dressed in armor and equipped with a mace. "Leave our brother alone!" Amelia shouted as she threw the mace at the robot.

The robot catches the mace and throws it back at them. "Girls! Duck!" cried Darrel. The girls do so and run away too. The Cloak bot starts to shoot lasers from its eyes and the group dodges them.

Amelia stands in front of a guillotine, and comes up with an idea. "Hey Butt Bolt! Bet you can't catch me!" Amelia blows raspberries at the robot, causing him to launch his arm at the athletic girl. Amelia dodges and the robot gets its arm wedged in the wall.

Jane and Hop pop climb on the guillotine just as Tint prepares to cast a lightning bolt on the robot. "Off with your arm!" Jane cried. "Eat the rich!" Hop pop cried as he dropped the blade. The arm of the robot is chopped off, then Tint focuses on what little power he has to stun the robot.

Jane and Amelia ran in one direction, while Darrel, Anne, and the Plantars ran in another direction. "How are we going to stop this thing?" Hop pop asked. Darrel points to the skeleton of the mosasaurus, "I've got an idea."

Cloak bot crawls out without his arm and finds Anne on the first floor of the museum. "Hey can opener! You wanna fight? I'm all yours!" The robot jumps down and equips himself with a hatchet blade. "Let's rumble, Robot!" Anne cried.

Anne and the Cloak bot fight each other, swinging swords, all while the Plantars and Darrel cut the supporting wires that hold the mosasaur skeleton together.

The Cloak bot gets the upper hand when he disarms Anne's sword, knocking her down. "Any last words," said the robot. Anne smiles, "You're history."

Then out of nowhere, Jane, Amelia, and Tint pierce the robot's chest with three swords. Anne calls to her friends above and they cut down the skeleton above them. "Darrel! Anne!" their friends cried. "Don't worry guys," said Anne. "We got him."

Suddenly, the Cloak bot emerges from the skeleton, with a damaged eye and exposed wires from his chestplate. He grabs Anne and Darrel with its only working arm and gives them a squeeze. "Now, you're history," said the robot. "Well it's a good thing we called for help," said Jane as she put her phone in her pocket.

The doors to the museum open, and Dr Jan along with security enter the building. Knowing his objective is to not be seen, the Cloak bot freezes in place. Anne and Darrel kick the bot, loosening its grip on the two and dropping them. The robot activates its jet boosters and takes off.

Dr Jan was amazed, "No way, a robot?" Darrel looks to his sisters and Tint to make sure they're okay. As Anne did with the Plantars. However, during the rukkus, Hop pop's hood was opened revealing his froggy nature to the curator.

"Uh, guys," said Darrel. He points to Dr Jan making them freeze in fear. Realizing the secret may be compromised. "Disguises!" Amelia cried. Dr Jan was more amazed than before, "Frog aliens?"

She turns to the security guards who were confused with what's going on. "I can't believe I forgot! Mitchell, Rodney, this has been a terrible misunderstanding. These are... performers rehearsing an exciting historical reenactment of some kind. We'll clean this mess up tomorrow. You two can go home. I'll take it from here."

And with that, the security took off for home. Darrel was impressed, "Thanks for covering Dr Jan. I think you want an explanation for all

this?" "And I can't wait to hear it," said Dr Jan. "Frog aliens, robots, and-" She looks to Darrel's staff he had equipped behind his back. "Is that an authentic ancient wizard staff?"

Darrel takes his staff and shows her the hidden written inscriptions on the wood. "Yep, but I'm afraid it's not working," he said. "It looks like it's also losing its color. But it is authentic either way." "This is a dream come true!" Dr Jan cried in excitement.

Anne was still hesitant on trusting her, however Tint spoke up. "There are some things we can't do on our own, Anne. That's why the Loyalitats and I contacted her, to meet her tonight and discuss more about the pot we saw today."

"It's true," said Dr Jan. "I even gave them access to bypass the security lasers." Anne was in complete shock, but she knew that now the truth is out. So she started from the beginning.

The group entered Dr Jan's office with the pot in her possession. The office was filled with books, fossils, and sticky notes all over the place.

"Wow," said Dr Jan. "Sounds like you've been through a lot. I see why you're in such a rush for answers. But why the heist? Why didn't you just ask me?" "Ugh, it made sense earlier," replied Anne. "If I'm honest, I'm sorta running on empty right now." "She hasn't slept in days," replied Sprig.

"Well that's no good," said Dr Jan. "Take a look at this." She shows them a sample of dirt she displays on her desk. "Back when I was younger, I would stay up for days on a dig. I couldn't go home knowing we were so close. One time I got sloppy with the dynamite charge and this was a triceratops."

The group groan in embarrassment at the dirt of the remains of a triceratops. "So you keep that to remind yourself to pace carefully?" Tint asked. "I sure did," replied Dr Jan. "So what you're trying to say is if I keep this up, I may do more harm than good?" Anne asked.

"Kind of like tonight," said Amelia. "Here, I'll make you a deal," said Dr Jan. "I'll keep your secret and help you research this artifact, if you go home and get some sleep." Darrel smiles and nods in agreement, "You've got yourself a deal."

"Before we go," said Anne. "Do you have a black light? We should check to see if this pot has any secret codes on it." Darrel then grabs Anne by the shoulders and drags her off. "Sleep first, hidden messages later," he said. "The world will still be spinning tomorrow," said Dr Jan. "Still not sold on this spinning globe theory," said Hop pop. "That's been a debate that's been questioned a long time ago," said Darrel.

The next day, Dr Jan was in her office until she decided she couldn't wait any longer. "Oh what the heck." She turned off the lights, turned on her black light flashlight and shined it on the pot. Next thing she knew, she stood jaw dropped, seeing that Anne was right about secret hidden messages on the pot. "No way," she said. "You've got to be kidding me!"

I wonder what Dr Jan has found on the antique pot. Guess we'll find out when we return with Loyalty Among Worlds. And just so you're aware, I'm doing the Owl House episode structure again where the first letter of every episode title writes a secret message. So far we've got THE TA_ _ _ _ . We'll get more episodes in due time. Until then, have a great day.

Love Thy Community

Chapter 51 - Love Thy Community

The very next day, Anne was well rested and excited. She came rushing down the stairs from her room and called upon the Plantars. "Plantars, Assemble!" Hop pop, Polly, and Sprig race to the living room and line up in front of her.

"Any news?" Sprig asked. "I got a text from Dr Jan," replied Anne. Anne shows her phone to the Plantars, which shows a few text messages from Dr Jan. "It says: Come see me when you've got a moment. I think I found something. Which means the sooner we talk to her, the sooner we get you home."

The Plantars cheer in excitement, and prepare to head back to the museum. However, when they get outside, they find Anne's parents and the Loyalitat family packing up their vehicles. "Oh good. You're here," said Mrs Boonchuy. "Help us with loading the car."

"Hey Sprig," said Tint. "Think you can help Jane and Amelia there?" He points to them who are trying to load up folded banners into the minivan. The Plantars happily accepted to help out. Anne however, was confused with what was going on.

"Okay, but we have got to get to the museum," said Anne. "We're going to have to raincheck on that," said Matthew. "Today's market day at the Thai temple and Mrs Boonchuy wants us all to be there." Anne grew impatient, because spending the whole day at the Temple would delay her plans on getting the Plantars home.

"But Mom, it's Super Important," said Anne in a begging tone. Mrs Boonchuy however, wasn't having it. "So is this," she said in a firm tone. "The Thai community hasn't seen you since you came back. And this is the perfect opportunity."

"Come on Anne," said Amelia. "It'll be fun. We're gonna experience your culture for the first time." "I can't wait to see what fun activities they have there," said Jane. Anne however wasn't having any of it. And that annoyed Mrs Boonchuy a bit.

"Look, I'll make you a deal," she said. "Just stay for one full hour, then you can do whatever." Anne was still upset with the idea, but she decided to give it a shot. "Fine."

Hop pop was curious about what was going on, and where they were going. "Market day? Temple?" Mr Boonchuy was happy to explain. "It's a monthly all-day event at the Thai Temple. Everyone gathers for food, music, sport, dance, and Thai language school."

"Hearing the subject of Thai sports and dance really got my daughters hooked on the idea to come along," said Sarah. "I've never seen them so excited to see the Thai community." "Me and Darrel were happy that we got to come with you guys," said Tint. "I'm kinda interested in this myself."

Shortly after, the group finds two school students, taking pictures and wearing shades. "Hey! I see you," said Anne. "Desi, Rico!" The two students took off after they were spotted. Leaving Anne and Darrel exhausted, "Oh great, one of the things I did not miss while I was away were those two again."

"Who are they? And what was that all about?" Mr Boonchuy asked. "Nosy gossip bloggers from the school paper," replied Anne. "Trying to get an exclusive photo of the kids who went missing." "They'll do anything for a story," said Darrel.

"Well if it's photos they want," Mr Boonchuy takes out his phone and opens up his photos. "I've got some they can use." His first photo shows Anne at age two, covered in pasta sauce and spaghetti noodles all over her hair. His next photo shows her wearing sunglasses, giving a cool pose.

The sudden photos made Anne blush in embarrassment and Darrel chuckled in response. "Say, Mr Boonchuy, do you have any more photos of Anne?" he asked. "I sure do," Mr Boonchuy replied. "DAD!" Anne complained. "Please stop!" The three give chase as Darrel tries to see more photos of Anne.

Later on, the group arrived at the Thai Temple. Darrel texted to Dr Jan, 'Something's come up that I can't miss. Me and Tint will meet you when we have time.' "And sent," said Darrel as he pressed the send button on his phone.

The Boonchuys and the Loyaltats unpack the cars and cross through the marketplace. The Plantars and Tint were amazed with wonder. Amelia and Jane couldn't stop jumping around. Darrel, his parents, and the Boonchuys were carrying all the stuff to their spot.

"The stalls sort of remind me of Wartwood," said Hop pop. " Look there's even a statue," said Sprig. Polly walks over to the event board to see photos of the community. One of them happens to be Anne sticking her tongue out while doing a traditional Thai dance. "No way, is this you?" "Yep," replied Anne. "I've been coming here since I was a kid. It seems cool at first, but believe me, it gets old quick."

The group set up the Thai Go stand, and the Boonchuys have Anne and Darrel hand out samples. "So I've graduated from dishwashing to sample handouts?" Darrel asked jokingly. Mr Boonchuy laughed, "Very funny Darrel, maybe you can entertain our community at the same time." "Just stand out in the open, so everyone can see you," said Mrs Boonchuy.

Anne grew suspenseful, she knew what was about to come next. "Here they come," said Darrel. "The Ba Train," said Anne. Darrel raised an eyebrow out of curiosity, until he watched as the community crowded her in happiness and relief. Anne bows in respect and says, "Hi, Ba-Med. Good to see you Papu."

"So, where were you two? Worrying your parents like that?" asked Ba-Med. "It's a long story," replied Darrel. "But I did gain some experience in other things while I was away." "Ooh can't wait to see," said Papu. The community take their leave as Darrel and Anne bow.

Polly was curious, "Hey guys," She gets in the same position as Anne and Darrel. "What does this mean?" "It's called a Wai," replied Anne. "It's how you show respect to your elders. Super important in Thai culture."

"Makes sense to me," said Tint. "Makes me want to learn a lot around here." "Same for me," said Hop pop. "Well we've got nothing but time around here," said Darrel. "Look around, see if you can find anything that interests you. But remember, your disguises stay on."

The amphibians cheered and raced off into the marketplace to find stuff to do. Anne and Darrel stayed behind handing out samples. "Hold on Dr Jan," said Anne. "Just one hour and I'll be there."

"I told her me and Tint will come the moment we're free," said Darrel. "Even if we arrive by tomorrow." "But don't you want to know now?" Anne asked. "It's so nerve wrecking." "I know," said Darrel. "But there's something about this place I didn't know until today." "What is it?" Anne asked. "I'll tell you in an hour," replied Darrel, smiling.

Across the marketplace, the Plantars, Tint, Jane, and Amelia were exploring various places. Polly and Tint stumble into a Thai language class, where they show off their communication skills after watching Mrs Boonchuy's romcom collection.

Hop pop and Jane stumble into a room in the temple where performers act in an ancient Thai dance. The dances they perform are called Kohn dancing. Having performance art as one of his interests, and with Jane by his side, Hop pop immediately went to perform his dance to the group. They cheered in awe, and Jane stood beside him. "I love it here," he said. "My turn," said Jane.

Sprig takes a walk with Amelia, helping himself to Thai snacks. "I wish Anne had told me about these earlier," he said. "So Amelia, what should we do next?" "Let's see if we can find what sports they play here," replied Amelia.

The two didn't have to look far. They spot a few athletes playing a ball game called Sepak takraw. The ball flies over a player's head, about to hit Sprig and Amelia. However, they showed off their moves, earning them a spot on opposite teams.

Back at the Boonchuys' stand, Anne was still offering samples. Darrel was performing, spinning his sample plates, wooing the passing crowds. Performing his postures and spin moves reminded him of his arcane training back in Amphibia. Even though he had trouble with magic, he would never forget the moves he was taught.

"Gotta say, I'm mighty impressed with your moves," said Mrs Boonchuy. "But please try not to do it too much, you'll ruin the food." Darrel bowed in respect, "Yes, Mrs Boonchuy. I apologize."

Mrs Boonchuy smiled, "Good. Now both of you, I'll be back soon." She carries a few plates and containers. "I'll be returning a few dishes some of the community members lent me." She takes her leave, leaving Anne and Darrel at the stand.

Darrel smiles as he watches her return the dishes. Then, he sees the community offer his mom what looks like tea leaves and spices. Then he was surprised when Anne spoke up. She looked at her phone to check how much time had passed. "What!? It's only been ten minutes!?"

"Woah, it's okay Anne," said Darrel. "So what if it's only ten minutes, we still have plenty of time." Darrel turns away and pulls out a couple coins seeing if he can pull off a few coin tricks.

Feeling like enough is enough, Anne eats the samples and calls Dr Jan. Her phone call goes straight into voicemail. "Hi, Dr Jan. It's me,

Anne. I'm at the Thai Temple, but I'll be there at the museum in half an hour."

What little did Anne know was that the cloak bot from before, intercepted her phone call and got a pinpoint on her and Darrel's location. However, the cloak bot was still badly damaged after their last fight, and couldn't go back in there. So the cloak bot came up with an alternative. "Deploying drones." He opens his neck hatch and launches a few dragonfly drones into the sky. "Search and Destroy," he commanded, and the drones fly off.

Darrel was having a blast performing coin tricks to the kids. And just as he turned around to get more samples, he found that Anne disappeared. He looks around to see someone wearing Anne's hat, but that didn't fool him.

Anne begins her return to the museum. But first, she had to sneak across the marketplace, find the Plantars, and get out before her mom could find her. She first finds Sprig and Amelia playing Sepak takraw. They looked like they were having a blast kicking the ball at each other. Anne decided to give Sprig a pass.

Then, she locates Hop pop and Jane in the temple performing another dance. Hop pop was wearing a traditional Thai mask, and Jane performed with traditional Thai dancing clothes. "Psst, Hop pop," whispered Anne. Jane gets up in her face and gestures, zipping her lips. "Anne, this is silent theater," whispered Hop pop.

Anne walks away in defeat, knowing that Sprig and Hop pop are enjoying Thai culture. She runs into Polly and Tint's Thai language class hearing them perform comedy in Thai. The kids laughed at their sketch, and left Anne in shock. "I've sat through Thai school for years and can barely string a sentence together."

Back at the Thai go stand, Darrel continued to serve out samples. "Thank you," said another customer. Darrel bows in respect, "You're welcome." Then, Sarah comes down to see how Darrel's doing.

"Hey Darrel, how's it going?" she asked. "Business is going well here," replied Darrel. "So what did the community give you?" She shows him the leaves and spices. "They told me that this blend of tea leaves and spices, helps maintain a healthy immune system. At first, I didn't want it. But Mrs Boonchuy insisted if I wanted to see you come back."

"That's so sweet of them, mom," said Darrel. She turns around hoping to find Anne as well. "Where's Anne?" Darrel sighed, "She said she had more important stuff to do. But I don't think I've told her why we're here in the first place." Sarah puts her hand on her shoulder and smiles. "Let's go find her and explain. We should start at the entrance to the temple."

At the temple's entrance, Anne was leaving for the museum. However, she bumped into the last person she'd ever want to get caught by: her mother. "Anne, you're supposed to be at the stand." Then, Darrel and Sarah arrived. "There she is," said Darrel.

"Darrel? Who's watching the stand?" Mrs Boonchuy asked. "I've got it covered," said Sarah. Matthew takes over the stand, a little confused with the Thai Go's menu. Luckily, the community aided him with what they asked for.

"You were sneaking out to visit your museum friend, weren't you?" Mrs Boonchuy asked in a comedic stern tone. "I would be surprised if she said no," said Sarah. Anne groaned, "Alright, you got me."

Mrs Boonchuy pinched her nose in disappointment. "I don't believe this, you couldn't wait one hour?" "Look, I already said hi to everyone," said Anne. "Now I have to get to the museum so I can get my interdimensional friends home. It's super important."

"Not as important as helping the community who helped us!" Darrel yelled. Anne was confused, "What do you mean?" Darrel sighed, "Before we left to help the Boonchuys, Mom and Dad told me what happened while we were gone. As mom grew more sick, the Boonchuys visited nearly every day to help take care of her. Most of

her medicine tonics came from Thai culture. This temple is the main source of all their medical needs. The Thai community gave so much aid to my family, they even gave them food for support. Why do you think your mom is handing back those dishes?"

Anne was stunned, until Mrs Boonchuy finished his speech. "Everyone cooked us meals and took care of all of us while you two were gone. We took up most of our time taking care of Sarah that we couldn't provide for ourselves."

Anne grew upset. All this time she thought it was a waste to be here, only to discover that her parents were suffering without their child being in their lives. "I had no idea," she said. "That's exactly what I said when I asked mom and dad," said Darrel. "I felt so grateful for what they did, I just had to find a way to pay them back somehow."

Mrs Boonchuy places her hand on her daughter's shoulder. "They were worried about you, and us," she said. "The community ran our store here and sent us the money. Even helped out at the restaurant. And never asked for anything in return."

Anne felt blessed with what the community did for her and for Darrel's family. "That's really cool." "It is cool," said Mrs Boonchuy. Darrel and Sarah smiled knowing that Anne is seeing things in a different perspective.

Suddenly, the four spot the drones flying over the temple. "What are those things?" Mrs Boonchuy asked. Darrel looks closely and glares at them. "Drones," he said. "Mom, you know what to do." Sarah nods as Darrel takes Anne.

"Where are you two going?" Mrs Boonchuy asked. "To make sure everyone's safe," said Darrel. "Safe from what?" "Uh, from those gossip kids at school," said Anne. "They must've sent drones to take new photos of us."

Sarah and Mrs Boonchuy take shelter in the temple and Darrel and Anne head out to find the others. One of the drones shoots a laser

near them causing them to scream. The scream caught Tint, Jane, Amelia, and the Plantar's attention. They rushed out to see what was going on.

"Anne, we heard a blast," said Sprig. "What's going on?" Darrel points to the drones, "That robot sent in drone scouts to attack us. We have to stop them and defend this temple." The gang prepares to fight, only to see more people coming together to help them out.

"We're right behind you," said Mrs Boonchuy. "Mom, stay in the temple," said Anne. "It's dangerous!" "This is our temple, and our community," said Mrs Boonchuy. "When one of us is under threat, we all are."

"Let's show these drones we are not afraid!" Sarah cried. The entire Thai community gets together and prepares to fight. Polly calls out to the people to charge as the drones shoot more lasers. They throw food, woks, and Thai masks, damaging them in the process.

Amelia launches Sprig into the air and slams the drone into the ground. Anne and Darrel slam down the drones with their sample plates. Mr Boonchuy and Matthew attempt to help, but fail to bring down one of the drones. As the one flies after them, Tint and Polly work together to bring down the drone. Tint gives Polly a small static charge from his hands, and throws Polly who gives the drone a swift kick to the face.

All the drones were destroyed, and the group celebrated. But then, Darrel was shocked. During their scuffle with the drones, the Plantars and Tint had their disguises removed. "Anne! Their disguises!" Darrel cried. Anne was shocked as well, because the community gets a glimpse of their interdimensional travelers.

"Everyone, I can explain," said Anne. "I know it's a lot to process," said Darrel. But they were stopped by the community. "No need to know," said an old woman. "If they're your friends, then they are our friends too. No matter how ugly they are."

"Burn," said Tint. "Ouch," said Hop pop. "It's funny, but it still stings," said Sprig. "They're talking about you three," said Polly. Anne and Darrel were relieved. "Wow guys, that's amazing," said Darrel. "I don't even know what to say," said Anne. "Except: *thank you so much* ." She spoke in Thai and bowed to her community. And so did Darrel, Tint, Jane, Amelia, and the Plantars.

Later that day, the community was cleaning up the drone debris. "Man, middle school equipment is really advanced these days," said Mrs Boonchuy. Matthew whispers in Darrel's ear, "So when are you going to tell them about your situation?" "When Anne is ready to tell them," replied Darrel. "These are her parents and it's only fair if she tells them herself."

"What are you talking about?" Mr Boonchuy asked. "Nothing," said Darrel and Matthew simultaneously. "Okay," said Mr Boonchuy in a suspicious manner.

"Well, hour's up Anne. You're probably itching to get out of here," said Mrs Boonchuy. Anne looks back to see the community working together, and smiles. "I think I like to stay a little bit longer," she said. "I thought you had more important things to do," "Mooom!" Anne exclaimed. "I'm kidding," said Mrs Boonchuy. "I'm kidding."

Suddenly, a horn was heard honking and they saw Dr Jan pull up in a pickup truck. "Sorry guys," she said. "This couldn't wait. It's just too dang exciting!" Dr Jan gets out of the truck and brings the group to a tree to see the secret message.

The gang sees the message in amphibian language. "It's written in some kind of ancient language," said Dr Jan. "If only we could read it." "Darrel," said Anne. "Your finger is glowing," Darrel looks down to his index finger and finds it glowing and sparkling with magic. Darrel comes up with the idea. He touches the pot and the words translate in the English language.

"How are you doing that?" Tint asked. "I don't know," replied Darrel. "But look. It says: Seek the Mother of Olms. She will guide you to

your Destiny." Everyone gasped in amazement. Knowing that this is their next clue to wondering what's going to happen next. Then, Anne said, "That doing anything for anyone?" "Not especially," said Sprig. "Nope," said Tint. "No siree," said Hop pop. "I'm drawn a blank," said Darrel.

Electronic Engineers

Chapter 52 - Electronic Engineers

After the events at the Thai Temple, the two families were exhausted and decided to take a break from any more excitement. Darrel, Anne, the Plantars and Tint were ecstatic to find their next clue from Dr Jan's pot. However, they're not sure what to do next. So Anne came up with an idea what to do after a couple days of rest.

At the Boonchuy residence, Anne and Darrel were in the living room along with Tint, Sprig and Hop pop. She got her laptop from her room and placed it on the coffee table. "And now, the internet," she introduced.

She opens up the laptop like the Arc of the Coven. Bright lights filled the screen, making the amphibians gaze in wonder and glory. "It's like your personal crystal ball," said Tint. "The answers to the mysteries of the universe right at your fingertips," said Sprig. "It's an endless well of knowledge," said Hop pop. "Both useful for research and entertainment," said Darrel. "And nothing says entertainment, like cat videos," said Anne as she pushed down on the touchpad.

A barrage of cat videos began playing in front of their viewers. Their eyes sparkled and widened from the Darrel fell victim to the cuteness of cats. Suddenly, they hear a loud bang coming from the garage. Then, Polly kicked the door open, covered in grease and oil.

She gets pumped up with excitement, "Guys, guys, guys, I did it," she cried. "I fixed Frobo! Come on, check it out!" She races back into the garage, leaving the group in shock. "Fixed him?" Anne asked.

The group decides to take a look in the garage. They were most surprised with what they saw. Frobo was fitted with a washing machine filled with Christmas lights. His mechanical arm was re-attached, and Ivan just installed an arm socket for a replacement

arm. Jake finished fitting Frobo with a new set of legs made from scratch. And to make sure Frobo had enough power, Polly attached wires all over his new body.

"So, what do you think?" Polly asked. "We tried as much as we could," said Ivan. "Pretty impressive, right?" Polly asked. She taps on Frobo for a touch of coolness, only to have an electric spark zap her little arm. "Impressive is one way to put it," said Anne sarcastically.

Jake tightens Frobo's fitting until it is secured. "Alright, the leg is finished," said Jake. "Great," said Polly. She jumps down and gets two socket plugs, ready to connect with each other. "You guys ready for this?"

The rest of the group was uncertain about activating Frobo. Even Jake and Ivan were worried. "Hold on, Polly. We're not ready for this kind of stuff," said Jake. "He's right," said Ivan. "We have no idea what it could do."

"I don't think you should turn him on yet," said Hop pop. "Yeah, are you sure you even know what you're doing?" Anne asked. "Of course I know what I'm doing, Anne. Everything's going to be just fine!"

Polly takes the plugs and connects them together. Preparing for the worst, the boys take cover. But so far, nothing has happened. Until Frobo activated his laser blasts from his eye sockets. The laser beam nearly hits the group and shoots through the garage door. Outside, Mr Boonchuy was excited about his package, until the laser hit it too.

Frobo kept shooting lasers, making holes in the garage. Until Darrel and Anne shut him down, disconnecting the power chords. The garage was covered with holes and soot from the lasers.

Hop pop was furious. "Polly, what were you thinking?! You could've just killed us!" "Sorry, sorry," said Polly. She hops back onto Frobo's

body and opens up the hatch in his chest. "I know he's got some kinks to work out, but-"

Hop pop raises his hand and stops her. "Nu-uh," he said. "Enough of this! I forbid you from working on this robot further." "I guess we could put it on hold," said Ivan. "I second that," said Jake. "I already have one robotic arm, I don't need another one."

Polly was shocked to hear her mechanical partners siding with Hop pop. "I think we should wait until we get back to Amphibia," said Anne. "Then, we can find people who know about robots." She looks to Jake and Ivan, "No offense," "None taken," said Jake. "We hardly know anything about robotics ourselves."

Polly feels distraught, feeling outnumbered by their opinions. "I know you miss him," said Sprig. "We do too, but you just need to be patient."

"You know what I just realized," said Darrel. "What if Frobo was reactivated, would he be the same? Machines like that have default factory settings. You liked him before, but now he's damaged and deactivated. If you fixed him now, he might just be a regular robot."

"Hey, how about a new robot friend to play with," said Anne. She goes through a pile of garbage and grabs a robot bear dressed in rap clothes. "This is Teddy Lumpkins. He used to be my best friend."

The robot activates its voice chip only to sound disoriented. "I eat Eyce..." The group was startled with what the robot was saying, until. "Cream. I eat ice cream." The group sighs in relief. "Loggle would love this thing," said Anne. "I thought this would go a different way," said Darrel.

"How dare you!" Polly shouted. "Frobo can't be replaced!" She jumps out of Frobo's hatch and knocks Teddy Lumpkins out of Anne's hands. "I want to nibble your fingers, hehehe." The last quote that robot said really made the group shutter.

Tint suddenly snapped, startling everyone. "Look Polly! I get it, you miss him. But Darrel has a point. The Frobo we know is gone! Even if you fix him, you can't fix his memories or his consciousness!"

Polly didn't like the way he suddenly snapped. "Why are you so touchy?" she asked. "Because I don't want you to get your hopes up if he never comes back!" Polly gasped, "You take that back!" "Tough Luck!" Tint shouted. "He's gone, end of story!" And with that, Tint runs out the room.

The humans were concerned. "Let me go talk to him," said Darrel. He runs after Tint, closing the door behind him. "I wonder why he acted this way all of a sudden," said Jake. "Beats me," replied Ivan. "We're going to call it a day. Good to see you Anne, and good luck with your quest." Anne waves goodbye, leaving her and the Plantars alone.

"Look Polly," said Hop pop. "I'm not sure what got Tint's goat, but I'm telling you right now: Don't work on Frobo." Polly sighed, "Maybe you guys are right."

"Wow, that's surprisingly mature of you," said Anne. "Hey, can I borrow your laptop?" Polly asked. "I don't see why not," replied Anne.

Back in the living room, Darrel finds Tint in Domino's cat bed. Arms crossed, and fighting back tears. Darrel begins to think that Tint is hiding something from everyone. "You really had us scared back there," said Darrel. "Is there something bothering you?"

Tint just turns away from Darrel, facing the wall. "Tint, you're not going to feel better if you keep it to yourself," said Darrel. Suddenly, Tint perks up and thinks back to him and Cronaxx. Cronaxx said the same thing, " *You're not going to feel better if you keep it to yourself,*"

"Come on, Tint," said Darrel. "It's getting late, we should get home." Tint takes a deep breath and nods. Darrel takes his disguise and the two return home for the night.

At the same time, Polly was still in the garage. Cleaning up the debris from Frobo's previous activation. "Eh, I forbid you, it's too dangerous," mocked Polly. "The look on their faces still was pretty funny, huh Frobes?"

She realizes that he's still deactivated, making her disappointed again. "Oh yeah, you're still broken. But don't worry, we can fix you. I just need to educate myself." She opens Anne's laptop and prepares to learn more about robotics. "Fasten your seatbelt Frobes, we're going in."

Two hours pass and Jake and Ivan return to the Boonchuy's house. They knock on the door and Anne answers. "Hey Anne," said Jake. "Me and Ivan forgot our tools, can we fetch them?" "Sure," said Anne.

The two enter the garage to find Polly researching robotics. "Hey Polly," said Ivan. "How's the research coming along?" "It's fine," replied Polly. "But I was distracted, and had two hours of my life taken from me."

"Hey what's that?" Jake asked. "Just videos on making robots," replied Polly. "I think I know a channel that's legit and will help with your skills," said Jake. He scrolls down and sees a thumbnail of two girls who look like mechanical engineers.

"Ooh," said Polly. "IT Gals: Just two girlfriends who really love robots. Cool." Jake clicks on the thumbnail and their video pops up.

The video starts with a robotic panda, trying to take their first steps. But then it falls flat on its face. "Isn't he adorable," said one of the girls. "I just can't with that belly," said the other. "Just goes to show: Anyone can make and maintain a robot, if you have the will, the know how.." "And our step-by-step tutorial." The two girls point to another thumbnail on their video for Polly and Jake to click on. "And remember: If it doesn't compute, it's time to reboot."

"Hey Jake," said Ivan. "I found our tools." He looks on the computer screen to find the IT Gals. "Is that the IT Gals?" he asked. "You know them?" Polly asked. "Their videos helped me perfect my skill making remote controlled cars," replied Ivan.

"Well what do you say we step out of your comfort zone?" Jake asked. "I could go for another video," replied Ivan. "Let's do it," said Polly.

The three engineers start watching the IT Gals robotics tutorial videos to increase their knowledge in robotics and engineering. As they watch the tutorials, they use their knowledge to repair their robotic subject. As long as they don't turn him on.

After another hour of hard work, Polly, Ivan, and Jake make modifications and repairs to the handmade robot. Frobo's newly made left arm is modified to look like his right arm. His legs are covered with cosmetic stickers.

Back at the video, the IT Gals conclude with a reminder. "You've heard from us. Now we want to hear from you." "Chime in down below in the comments."

"Interesting query, ladies," said Polly. "Okay, I think that's it," said Ivan. "This robot looks better than before," said Jake. "I think we're just about finished," said Polly as she takes out her remote and pushes the red button.

But after a few seconds, nothing happens. "Why aren't you turning on?!" Polly complained. "Polly, it's okay," said Jake. "It might need a power source of some kind." "But what kind of power source?" Polly asked. "I'm not sure," said Ivan. "But I think I know someone who might."

They use Anne's computer to connect with the IT Gals, Jess and Ally, using an app called Vroom. The Gals connect to the call, and meet Polly, Ivan, and Jake. "Hello." "How's it going?"

"Hi," said Polly. "My name's Polly, and the two behind me are Ivan and Jake." "Hi there," said Jake. "Huge fan of your videos," said Jake.

"Anyway," said Polly. "I have a bit of a robotics issue." The two IT Gals see the robot from behind them and gaze with wonder. "Oh My Gosh!" "Is that a robot?" "He's beautiful." Then, their Panda bot appears on screen to get a good look. However, they push their creation out of the way. "Tell us everything."

"Well he had a bit of an accident," said Polly. "I think we've done a pretty sweet job of putting him back together, but he just isn't powering on." "Well what are you using as a power source?" Ally asked. "She pretty much used batteries from the tv remote," said Ivan.

Thankfully the girls knew what the problem was. "Oh no. That'll never be enough," said Ally. "You could try a battery module with a compatible connector and corresponding voltage," said Jess. Ally takes out her phone and shows the trio an image of the power source they were talking about. "Like the kind they put in those creepy animatronic children's toys," she said.

Polly looks over to the Teddy Lumpkins doll and smirks. "I think I've got just the thing." But she soon realizes that Jake and Ivan were still behind her. "As much as we like to go further," said Ivan. "We just can't risk any more damages."

"Of course," said Ally. "I'd advise you guys not to turn him on in your garage." "Yeah," said Jess. "You need to be in a big space like a warehouse, and have tons of fire extinguishers. That thing looks like it's capable of a lot of output."

"I'll say it again," warned Ally. "Do not do this at home." "If you guys want, we can help you run a space," said Jess. "You'd do that for us?" Jake asked. "Of course," replied Jess. "I mean it'll take a couple of weeks, but-"

"Okay girls," Polly interrupted. "I'll take that into consideration, bye!" Polly ends the call leaving the four humans stunned. "Do you think she's going to turn that thing on?" Ally asked Jess. "Oh yeah," replied Jess.

"Polly what gives?" Ivan asked. "They said they can help us run a space. We should take up that offer." "That'll take a long time," said Polly. "Let's get him powered up now!" "Now listen up Polly," said Jake. "Those girls are professional robotics. They know what to expect, so if you do this they'll see a damaged garage."

"It's time we put our feet down," said Ivan. "We're holding off on Frobo until we get their help. Either that, or we're out of here." Polly was stunned, she wanted to get her robotic friend back, and the only helping hands she has are threatening to leave her to do this by herself.

Not wanting to abandon her work, she opens the garage and kicks the two humans out. She throws out their tools as well. "Thank you for your help, I'll take it from here. Bye!" Polly closes the garage feeling stunned.

At the Loyalitat household, Tint was resting up while Darrel was looking out the window. He looks up to the moon, and envisions the red glow from the moon in Amphibia. "Hard to believe I almost forgot the color of our moon," said Darrel.

Suddenly, Tint wakes up with a terrible feeling. "Darrel, something's wrong," he said. "What is it?" Darrel asked. "We've got to get back to Anne's place." The two rush down the stairs and make their way to the Boonchuy house.

At the same time, Anne, Hop pop, and Sprig were watching a series of galactic movies in numerical order. "I still can't believe you guys like the prequels more," she said. "Look Anne, we just watch them in order with no context," said Sprig. "You can't blame us for not having nostalgia," said Hop pop.

Polly rushes in, feeling excited. "I did it!" she cried. "I fixed him!" Jake and Ivan rush in through the front door. "Polly! Don't!" they cried. "We're not ready!"

Anne, Sprig, and Hop pop were surprised, "I thought you were looking at cat videos," said Anne. "Gosh dang it, Polly. You outfoxed me again." "There was deception, yes," said Polly. "But we got help on the internet, and now if I press this button, he'll be back! Yay, Right?"

The others were stern with disapproval. "NO! No yay!" Shouted Ivan. "Didn't I forbid you guys from working on him?" Hop pop asked. "To be fair, we only wanted to customize him," said Jake. "We know it's too dangerous for something like this."

"People shouldn't mess with things they don't understand," said Hop pop. "My hair was still singed from the last time Polly knew what she was doing," said Sprig gesturing his fingers. "What if you turn him on this time, and he blows off your legs?" Anne asked. "I mean you just got your legs. It's awesome that you fixed him, but we have to wait until we get back to Amphibia to turn him on, just to be safe."

"And like I said," said Darrel as he entered the front door. "You may have fixed him, but you won't get the same Frobo you befriended before. That's gone." Tint walks in front of him. "I say we turn him on where we can't cause any more damage to the house," he said. "Second it," said Hop pop. "Third," said Sprig.

"All in favor?" Darrel asked as he raised his hand. The rest of them follow suit, making Polly really upset. "I don't believe this! After all the work I've done, and all the help you provided, and how much I missed him. You all want to leave him dead?!"

"Look Polly," said Tint. "I just don't want you to go through with this." He takes a deep breath. "When I snapped at you earlier, it's because I know life doesn't work that way. You can't bring back the dead, even if you have all the magic in the world." He sniffles starting to show tears in his eyes.

Polly wouldn't have any of his voice of reason. "Well who needs you all?!" She races back into the garage and locks the door. The group tries to stop her, but have trouble getting inside. Polly wasn't going to wait another minute. She believes that her robotic friend was just a push of a button from being reactivated.

"I ain't waiting another second to see my best friend again," she said. She pushes the button, turning on the power cords charging the robot. The power surge causes a temporary blackout. All the electricity surges through the robot's circuits, until finally Frobo opens his eyes.

His eyes glowed blue and said, "Startup engaged. Model F0-R1, factory settings restored." Polly jumps up into Frobo's face to get his attention "Frobo, is that you? It's me, Polly."

However, Darrel was right. Reactivating Frobo initiated the factory default settings. "Username not recognized," said Frobo. "Will now attempt to make contact with headquarters. A higher vantage point is necessary."

Frobo initiates his rocket launchers from his hands and flies through the roof of the garage. Polly was holding on for dear life, and the others attempted to follow it from the ground. "Hang on, Polly!" Hop pop cried out with his disguise on. "Oh no, look," said Anne. "She actually did it," said Darrel.

Up in the sky, Frobo's booster engines continue to burn until they shut off. "Booster malfunction detected," said Frobo. "Oh that can't be good," said Polly. The two start falling from the sky as a result.

Down below, the group watches in horror as Polly falls from the sky. Just then, the IT Gals arrive on their scooter. "Hey, do you guys know Polly?" Jess asked "Little kid, has a tail, builds a crazy robot?" The group points up showing them what Polly has done. "Oh my gosh!" They cried.

Polly falls with tears in her eyes. "Frobo! We're in big trouble!" She gets in Frobo's face one last time, and realizes that Darrel and Tint were right with what they were trying to say. She may have fixed Frobo, but his personality wasn't there anymore. She gets into his face one last time and said, "Please! It's me, Polly! You've got to remember. Oh Frobo, I just missed you so much. And now we're both going to die. I'm so sorry!"

Polly's tear crawls down into Frobo's robotic hull. Inside his central mainframe, Polly's tear causes a spark inside, showing him memories of him and Polly. Frobo's eyes go from blue to his normal yellow eyes, bringing back his personality.

"Po-Polly," he said. Polly snaps out of her sadness and sees her mechanical friend again. "Frobo, you're back! Yay!" The two see that they're still falling to the ground, and Frobo comes up with an idea.

He takes Polly and stuffs her in his washing machine compartment. He uses his malfunctioning rocket boosters to slow them down from falling at a fast pace. He slams into a tree, then the Boonchuy's roof, and finally the backyard, making a crater in the process.

The group finds Polly dazed and surprised in the crater. "I found her," said Sprig. "She's okay." "Oh thank goodness," said Jake. "Oh thank Frog," said Hop pop. Polly opens her eyes back to Frobo, who is back to being bits and pieces after saving her life.

"You guys were right," she sobbed. "I was so impatient with bringing him back to life that I killed him all over again. I'm sorry Tint, I should've listened to you. Now, I'm crying for him again."

But Jake and Ivan spotted something. "Hey Polly, is that your friend?" Ivan asked. "Po-Polly," said a familiar robotic voice. The gang was surprised, Frobo was reactivated. He may have lost his body, but his head is still functioning.

Polly was relieved, "Frobo! You big lovable lug! I'll fix you right this time, and be slow and careful. No matter how much I missed ya."

Tint smiled, "It doesn't matter if you can't fix his body. His personality is all that matters in life." "He's right," said Darrel. "The body may be different, but the Frobo is still the same."

"Sturdy." "Impressive," said the IT Gals. Their eyes sparkled in wonder. "His hard drive is still in one piece," said Jake. "I think next time, we just need to tune the PID controllers," said Jess. "Wait, we as in the five of us together?" Ivan asked. "Of course," said Ally. "So about that PID controllers," said Polly. "They could help with his latitudinal and longitudinal stability..."

"Wow, Polly really got into this computer stuff, huh," said Anne. "With all the knowledge she's going to get in this world and Amphibia, she's going to make great robots," said Darrel. Tint smiled, "Maybe we should take a lesson from her and use the interweb to educate ourselves too."

The group thought for a second until Sprig spoke up, "Cat videos?" "Cat videos," said the four friends. The group danced to another cat video out of impulse. "Ain't that cute," said Hop pop. Mr Boonchuy comes outside and screams, "AAAHH! THE BACKYARD!"

Out of the Frying Pan

Chapter 53 - Out of the Frying Pan

A new day arrives at the city of Los Angeles, and with it, whole new surprises. The city was going around with their normal routines, unaware of the superstitious nature that was surrounding them. With the robots appearing all over town, it was only a matter of time before the officials got wind of their activities. And when they find that they're targeting certain teenagers, they are going to start asking questions.

At the Loyalitat household, Darrel was folding laundry with Tint. Tint was so happy that he was helping the Loyalitat family around the house. Despite losing most of his magical abilities, he was able to rely on his own skills. Darrel smiled seeing Tint smiled. After everything his amphibious friend has been through, he would expect him to be more depressed than ever.

Suddenly, Darrel and Tint were startled with Jane and Amelia's sudden appearance. "Oh, girls you startled me," said Darrel. Jane grinned, "Did you tell Mom and Dad yet?" "Because you promised you would," said Amelia. "And you know we don't like it that you would keep them in the dark like that. They gave us life."

Darrel knew they were right. Now was the time to tell his parents about him and Anne. "Alright," he said. "Go get my phone, I need to make a call." Amelia rushes into Darrel's room, grabs his phone and makes her way back. Darrel takes the phone and dials up a number.

Meanwhile, in the inner city of Los Angeles, up on the rooftops, the cloak bot was finishing up the repairs on his structure. On top of the cathedral bell tower, the cloak bot was fitted with human machine features such as a frontloader scoop, a tire for a shoulder patch, and a buzzsaw for a foot.

Just as he finished attaching his new arm into his structure, he gets a call from Andrias. The robot answers without hesitation. "What's good, cloak bot?" greeted the tyrant king. "Checking in to see how things are going." Andrias was in his throne room waiting for his answers.

"Did you get the book?" he asked. "Book secure," replied the bot as he revealed a Cynthia Coven book to the king. Andrias was most pleased, "Why that's great!"

However, the king saw a little flaw in the retrieval of the book. "Wait, that's book three," he said. "You rusty bucket, I need book two." The cloak bot shed utter disappointment. "Book two out of stock."

Andrias groaned, "Homes, have mercy. Next you're going to tell me Anne and Darrel aren't dead yet." The cloak bot knew at that point he's going to be in hot water for failing his task. So he decided to fess up. "Hmm, working on it," he replied.

If Andrias wasn't disappointed before, he surely is now. Knowing that the only two that could stand in his way are still out there, is making him angry. "Well, looks like we'll have to up the stakes," he said as he pushes a button on his wrist.

The button was revealed to be a self-destruct button. The cloak bot looks down at his chest and reveals a countdown. The cloak bot was distraught knowing he's on a time limit now. "You have one hour to destroy those kids," said Andrias. "Or the bomb planted in your chest will destroy you. Okay? Cool, Andrias out." Andrias bids the bot farewell and cuts communication with it.

The cloak bot knew it was now or never. But then gets a reading of an unknown frobot unit that has been detected in the vicinity. And that unknown frobot, unfortunately is Frobo. The cloak bot heads off in that direction and races as fast as it could.

Back at the Boonchuy's house, Frobo's eyes blinked red for a few seconds. Frobo didn't think of any importance, and just shrugged it

off. Or lack thereof being he's a head of course. He was in the living room along with the Plantars, Tint, Mr and Mrs Boonchuy and the Loyalitat family.

They watched Fumagator Four while Anne and Darrel were helping around the house for a bit. Anne was doing the laundry and taking out the trash, while Darrel was washing the dishes, and making sure everyone was comfortable and respectful around the house.

"You know you two," said Mrs Boonchuy. "It really is remarkable of how much you have grown." Anne blushed, "Aww thanks mom." Darrel blushed too, "Thanks, Mrs Boonchuy." "I mean, Anne, you used to be so irresponsible," said Mr Boonchuy. "And Darrel, you used to be very quiet and shy around others. It's like you've found your comfort zone."

"You two really have changed," said Sarah. "It's like you have nothing to hide from us," Darrel sweated when he heard the word hide. Anne looked away a bit out of shame. "We're just so proud of you two," said Mrs Boonchuy. "I think Darrel is a great influence to our daughter. You two should be most proud." Matthew and Sarah nodded. "We already are," said Matthew.

Darrel looks to Anne, who is feeling guilty. "Anne, could you help me for a second?" He takes Anne by her arm and pulls her into the kitchen. "Anne, I think now's the time to come clean," said Darrel. "I know," said Anne. "We have to tell everyone about Andrias, and the robot hunting us."

"Actually, my mom and dad know about Andrias and the robot already," said Darrel. "What?!" Anne exclaimed. "You told them already?!" "I had too," replied Darrel. "When I sensed you were in trouble, I had to tell them straight away. I didn't want you to get hurt. They agreed to keep it out of the open, at least until people start asking questions."

"Oh," said Anne. "I thought we agreed to keep Andrias, the invasion, and our powers a secret." "I didn't agree to that," said Darrel. "But

weren't you at my house when I- Oh, that's right," said Anne. "You raced for home before we could agree on anything."

"We have to tell them everything," said Darrel. "Hold on," said Anne. "If your family already knew about Andrias, then what are you keeping from them?" Darrel takes Anne's hands and smiles in her face. Anne blushed and realized what he was hiding. "Mom and Dad don't know about us," said Darrel. "I have to tell them, and your parents." Anne nodded, "Okay, let's do it." "I'm right beside you," said Darrel.

The two enter the living room with their heads up high and get in front of the television. "Listen everyone," said Anne. "There's something we have to tell you." Jane and Amelia smiled in excitement, and the parents were slightly confused. "What is it, sweetie?" Mrs Boonchuy asked.

The two friends look to each other with gentle smiles on their faces and look back to their families. "Well, the thing is.."

Before anything could happen, they hear a sudden bang coming from outside. The furniture shakes in response to the tremors. "What the heck was that?" Anne asked. "I can take a wild guess," replied Darrel. They open the shades to the window and see the cloak bot outside the front yard.

"He's back!" Darrel cried. "Kids," said Mrs Boonchuy. "What's going-" "GET DOWN!" Anne dives down, knocking her parents down to the ground. The Loyaltats got at a safe distance from the window.

The cloak bot crawls into the house showing its repairs to the group. The group runs upstairs looking for a place to hide. "Everyone, quick," said Mrs Boonchuy. "Into my workout room!" The group enter the room and see a lack of workout equipment and a lot of hand-crafted Anne Boonchuys made by her mother. The whole entire room was made of Anne's ever since she disappeared.

"I am so startled," said Darrel. "This is not a workout room," said Anne. "Yes it is," said Mrs Boonchuy. "When I thought you ran away, this is where I work out all my stress." Anne looks over to an Anne dressed like a doctor. "Why is this one dressed like a doctor?" Amelia asked. "A mom can't dream, can't she?" Mrs Boonchuy replied.

"Sometimes, I feel like you expect too much from your daughter," said Darrel in an upsetting tone. The cloak bot suddenly bursts from the floor of the house and into the same room they're in. But as he scans the room, he finds multiple Annes in the area. Apparently Mrs Boonchuy's craftsmanship was so good, it made the robot confused.

"Multiple Anne Boonchuys confirmed," said the cloak bot. Then, he scans Darrel from the opposite of where the real Anne was. "Darrel Loyality confirmed."

Mr and Mrs Boonchuy were shocked. "It's after the two of you!?" "What!?" "It's a long story," said Darrel. He draws out his magic staff, still aware that he has trouble casting powerful spells. "Eliminate them," the robot said as he lunges at Darrel and a decoy. Darrel dodges and taps his staff on the robot causing a jolt of electricity to purge through him.

"There are a couple things I haven't told you guys," said Anne. The group races downstairs and jumps into Mr Boonchuy's car. They make a quick getaway as the robot reactivates itself. He looks to his timer, reminding himself he's running out of time. And only thirty minutes remain.

"Kids, why is there a robot chasing us?" Mrs Boonchuy asked. "This is exactly what we were going to tell you," said Darrel. "Apparently the King of Amphibia kinda has it out for us," said Anne. "They punched and blasted him in the face," said Sprig.

The Boonchuys were surprised, "You what?!" "Anne!" "Keep your eyes on the road!" Jane asked. The Boonchuys looked back and swerved back on course, while the cloak bot was hopping after them.

Now that he was on a timer, he didn't have time to stay hidden from the public and hopped passed a girl walking her bulldog.

"Can't this robo snail go any faster?" Polly asked. "I'm sorry, I'm not used to running for my life from a crazy robot," replied Mr Boonchuy. "I know just how you feel Mr B," said Hop pop. "Why, the first time that robot attacked us-" "This Isn't the First Time!?" Mr Boonchuy asked. "Not helping, HP!" Tint cried.

As the group continues rushing through the streets, Mr Boonchuy suddenly stops. "Why'd you stop?" Amelia asked. "The light's red," replied Mr Boonchuy. "THERE ARE NO RED LIGHTS IN A CAR CHASE!" Darrel shouted. The light turns green and they floor it to the freeway.

The group gets on the freeway, passing cars and trucks as much as they possibly can. The cloak bot uses his new buzzsaw foot to remain at top speeds and chase after the car.

The kids spot the robot not far from them. Amelia looks in Anne's tennis duffle bag and comes up with an idea. She gives Anne one of her rackets and opens the trunk. "Set me up, Anne!" Ameila shouted. Anne takes out a tennis ball and hits it at the robot. The robot counteracts Anne's attack and she and Amelia continue to fight back. Darrel also stepped in, hoping to give their tennis ball an electric charge.

"Your backhand is looking pretty rusty, Anne," said Mr Boonchuy. "Less talking, more driving!" cried Darrel. The cloak bot takes out a nail gun and fires a few rounds at the kids. Anne closes the trunk and the robot keeps firing.

"There's a split coming up," said Mr Boonchuy. "Which freeway should I take?" "I don't know," replied Mrs Boonchuy. "The 405?" "Not at this hour," replied Sarah. "It'll be jammed." "Guys," said Anne. "I've got the map on my phone," said Matthew. "As long as it's not map search," said MR Boonchuy. "That one is no good."

The cloak bot raises his forklift hand to slam on the car when, "DAD! Turn!" Anne cried. And Mr Boonchuy does that, taking the exit route. However, the cloak bot jumps in front of the car, scaring the kids. But Mr Boonchuy does not stop, or show any signs of slowing down. He runs down the road leaving behind tire marks on his hull.

The cloak bot looks at his timer to reveal nearly twenty minutes remain. The group cheers for Mr Boonchuys act of impulse. "Alright Dad!" said Anne. "That was awesome. Can you take me for driving lessons sometime?"

The group exits the freeway and turns under a small bridge. "Did we lose it?" Mrs Boonchuy asked. "I don't know," replied Tint. "That robot has a habit of coming back." And boy how Tint was right.

The road suddenly gets a hole cut through above them, and a couple of debris fall on the car. The robot jumps in front of them, and Mr Boonchuy backs up into a junkyard. The group exits the car and try to find a safe place to hide.

The group find themselves hiding behind hilltops of junk and look around for any signs of their attacker. "See anything?" Tint asked. "All clear here," said Amelia. "Clear," said Polly. Darrel takes a deep breath. "Okay guys, I think we're safe for now," said Anne. However, Anne and Darrel were far from safe from something else.

"Anne Savisa Boonchuy," said her stern mother. "What is goin on?!" Darrel steps in to explain. "Okay," he said. "I'll make this short. The king is planning to invade our home with robots, and he's targeting us because we hold special gifts. And we have to stop him." "Yeah, that's pretty much it," said Anne.

"Yeah, but why Anne? Why?" Mrs Boonchuy asked. "Is there something you like to tell us?" "Mom, take it easy," said Anne. "Honey, maybe we should hear them out," said Mr. Boonchuy. But Mrs Boonchuy wouldn't have it.

"No, they're lying to us," she said. "Hey, my son is not a liar!" Matthew shouted. Darrel raised his hand in silence, "This is my fight, Dad. I can handle this." He steps up and tightens his grip on his staff. "There's a difference between lying and hiding facts about Amphibia. We hid the facts to keep you safe."

"Even if you hid more facts, you two have done something," said Mrs Boonchuy. "That's why that thing is after us!" "It's complicated," said Anne. Mrs Boonchuy was far beyond disappointed that she wouldn't give the two kids a chance to explain.

"I knew it," she said. "We were wrong about you two. Anne, you're still the same irresponsible little girl who used to cut class. And Darrel, you're still too scared to take action and follow everyone you stand behind. When are you going to grow up!?"

Having heard enough of her rant, Darrel stomps on the ground causing a little tremor like the one from Toad Tower. "She *is* growing up Mrs Boonchuy!" he shouted. "And I'm growing up too. You're just not seeing it!" "All I see are two kids always getting into trouble," said Mrs Boonchuy. "Always cowering when things get rough, why do you always defend her actions? You know that she's always getting into trouble. Always making the wrong choices. Always-"

"MRS BOONCHUY! CAN'T YOU UNDERSTAND?! I LOVE HER!" Darrel's shout echoed the entire junkyard. Even got the cloak bot's attention. The Boonchuys were shocked, and so were Sarah and Matthew. Darrel breathed heavily, knowing that his secret is out of the bag. He takes Anne's hand to confirm his statement.

"You're in love with Anne, now?" Sarah asked. Darrel nodded silently. Anne nodded as well. "But Darrel," said Matthew. "What about Sasha?" Darrel turns to his parents, "I broke up with her back in Amphibia," he replied. He turns his attention back to the Boonchuy's.

"I broke up with her, because she was growing up to be someone I don't want to be. A selfish manipulator, an influencer for all the wrong

reasons. But I was no better, I did cower behind her. However, my time in Amphibia made me grow out of my comfort zone. And then, the time came for me to step up, to be my own man."

He takes both of Anne's hands and continues his speech, "But, when I thought about Anne, your daughter, I realized that she was there for me when no one else was. Deep down, she's smart, fun, kind, and loyal to her best friends. That's why I chose to find her before Sasha. Because she would do the same for me."

"Look mom," said Anne. "I don't know if I'm the daughter you want me to be. But Darrel knows the kind of person I want to be. And I'm sorry. It's true, I kept the truth from you. But I did it to protect the people I care about."

The Boonchuys look at the Plantars and Tint. Tint walked up to them and said, "Sometimes we do the wrong things for the right reasons." "I've learned so much from you two these past few weeks," said Anne. "Even Darrel learned a thing or two from you as well." "It's true," said Darrel. "And I've finally appreciated how much you've done for me," said Anne. "Now, we're asking for your help."

She takes her mother's hands, concluding her speech. "Please, I can't do this without you." Sarah and Matthew smile, "Do you love our son?" Anne smiled, "More than anything, Mr and Mrs Loyalitat." "Then you have our support," said Matthew. "And you have ours," said Jane and Amelia. Darrel smiled, "What do you say, Mr and Mrs Boonchuy? Are you in?"

Mr Boonchuy smiles and says, "We're with you two, right Mom?" "I don't know," she replied. "Isn't this all just too much?" "It is," said Sarah. "But if it weren't for Amphibia, I probably wouldn't be here right now."

Suddenly, a large crash was heard in the distance. The group ran for cover and looked out in the distance. The robot was on the prowl, searching for Anne and Darrel. He picks up the car and then throws it away when he can't find the humans.

"So, do we have a plan?" Sprig asked. "Really hoping for a plan." Darrel looks to his staff, then his own fist. Realizing that there is one way to save them, he took charge. "We've got to pin down that robot, then take him apart piece by piece," he said. "We need him distracted somehow."

Anne looks across the yard and finds materials like the ones Mrs Boonchuy had back at the house. "Hey mom, feel like putting your artistic skills to use?" she asked. Mrs Boonchuy was curious as to what she meant, but then went straight to work.

The cloak bot continues to search for the two humans at a fast pace. Knowing his time was running short, in less than ten minutes, he continued to prowl the junkyard. He scans the area and mistakes a basketball with a mop on top for Anne. "Target confirmed." He kicks the ball with his buzzsaw foot, only to find that it was a decoy.

"Hey Metal Head!" Anne cried. "Looking for me?" The robot turns to find more decoys of Anne, confusing the robot. "How about looking for me first?" Darrel called out. The robot turns to find Darrel decoys, causing the robot to smoke. "Error, error, error, error!"

The cloak bot takes out its nail gun weapon and fires at all the decoys. "Now guys!" Anne cried. Amelia and Jane push a tilting car over the robot's head. The robot catches it, allowing the others to attack the robot with pipes. But the robot retaliates by throwing the car away, then pushing the rest of the group back.

The robot then jumps on Anne and Darrel, grabbing them with his makeshift claw. "Targets confirmed," said the robot. "Mission complete!" "Hey!" shouted Sarah. "Leave our children alone!"

Sarah takes her cane then reveals it to be a hidden sword sheathed inside for self defense. Mrs Boonchuy comes in full swing with a hammer. They cause major damage to the robot, bashing it, and cutting off its legs.

"Wow, Mom," said Anne. "Good arm." "How did you learn to do that, Mom?" Darrel asked. "Mrs Boonchuy and I take the same self defense classes," replied Sarah. "Los Angeles can be a dangerous city."

"That was crazy, you guys," said Sprig overlooking the damaged robot. "I like your style Mrs B," said Polly. "Weren't you guys surprised by that display of veracity?" Hop pop asked the fathers. The two stood silent until Mr Boonchuy simply said, "No."

Suddenly, the damaged cloak bot laughed and revealed its self-destruct countdown in ten seconds. The group was scared, knowing he was going to blow up. "What do we do?" Hop pop asked. "All that and we're still toast?!" Polly asked.

"Not on my watch," said Anne in a demonic voice. "It's all part of the plan," said Darrel in his demonic voice. And for the first time, both families get to see Anne and Darrel unlock their Calamity powers. Anne's eyes glow blue, while Darrel's glow red.

They kick the robot high into the air until it reaches the edges of outer space. Then, the timer runs out and the robot is no more. The robot explodes into the sky and the two humans cut themselves from their newfound powers.

"Anne? Darrel?" "What was that?" Mr Boonchuy asked. "Calamity," said Darrel. That's all he said, before he collapsed to the ground out of exhaustion. "We have so much to tell you," said Anne before she collapsed too. Sprig and Tint catch them and the group return to the car.

On the road, Anne was resting on her Mom's shoulder, and Darrel was resting on Anne's shoulder. Seeing the two together made Mrs Boonchuy and Sarah smile. "Honestly, Mrs Boonchuy," said Hop pop. "Anne and Darrel have been trying to-" "Protect you four," finished Mrs Boonchuy. "I get it now. And whatever it is you guys need to do, we'll do it together."

She hugs the kids and the amphibians, while Mr Boonchuy and Matt watched the whole thing from the front of the car. "Aw," said Mr Boonchuy. "The driver always gets left out of the group hug." "It's okay," said Matthew. "I'm left out of it too."

"So, Sarah," said Mrs Boonchuy. "About your son, and my daughter. Do you think they really love each other?" "If it's anything like my relationship with my husband, I think they do," smiled Sarah. Mrs Boonchuy smiled as she looked back at the sleeping teens.

Well, looks like their hyped up chase has come to an end. But where one chase ends, another begins. Because like it was mentioned before, all the weird stuff in Los Angeles was bound to bring attention. Somewhere in an undisclosed location in Los Angeles, a couple of FBI agents were looking at recent traffic cameras on the recent car chase. "Get HQ on the line," said one of the agents. "This may be the real deal." They zoom in on the picture revealing the undisguised amphibians inside the car. "It's time to call Mr. X."

Federal Follies

Chapter 54 - Federal Follies

After the incident in the junkyard, the Boonchuys and the Loyalitat's were relieved that everyone was safe. They were shocked knowing how much had happened to Anne and Darrel the last few months. They were even more shocked knowing that they have special powers that could make them super strong and super fast. They all returned home and made sure they got plenty of rest.

The next day, Darrel woke up from his long rest. He was back in his room feeling rejuvenated but woozy in the head. "Wow, what a night," he said. "You really gave your family quite a shock."

Darrel turns to see Tint looking out the window. "But they said they've never been more proud of you for stepping up," he said. Darrel smiled, "Well I've faced worse." Tint shook his head, "Not the robot, the Boonchuys." Darrel was most confused. "You stepped up and defended Anne against her mother's judgment. You knew that she was growing up, that she wanted to protect her parents from danger. And now, they see the man you wanted to become for yourself."

"Really?" Darrel asked. "See for yourself," said Tint. Just then, Darrel's phone vibrates a text message. The text was from Anne asking him, "Going to the movies, bringing the Plantars, wanna come?" Darrel smiled, "Guess we're relaxing for today. It's time I showed you my favorite place in LA." Tint smiled and the two headed downstairs.

Meanwhile, somewhere in the suburbs of the neighborhood, a strange ice cream truck was parked on the street. But inside the truck was more than just a stash of frozen treats. It was an undercover spy van with two agents occupying the area. One was typing on the computer wearing a headset and a loose tie around his

neck. The other agent sitting behind him was bald, wearing glasses, a purple suit with a yellow hibiscus. He also wears purple lipstick to match the suit.

"Do you know why they call me Mr X, Jenny?" He asked his partner. Jenny remains silent in response to his question. "Right you are Jenny," said Mr X. "I deal explicitly with extraterrestrials. And rumor has it that there are a few in the area. Hit it Jenners."

Jenny types on the computer bringing up the file of the Plantars and Tint on screen. "Very good, Jenny. Very nice," said Mr X. "This is why you're the best." Jenny may be silent around his partner, but he has his way of showing appreciation. Mr X notices Jenny blushing to his compliment.

"But, who is this I wonder?" Mr X asked, pointing at Anne's arm and Darrel's hand. The image clearly got a clear shot of the amphibians, but they missed a shot of the humans. "Miss String Bean."

Jenny types in any possible theory that they could be aliens too, but the computer comes up with no identification. Other than likely to be a human companion.

"Sounds like some real eighties movie junk," said Mr X. "Well one thing's for sure, these aliens are being sheltered. And whoever is harboring these monsters will be in big trouble."

Suddenly, a knock on the door was heard. Outside was a kid hoping to get ice cream from their truck. Mr X opens the window door to see the kid. "One popsicle, please," he said. "Sorry little man," said Mr X. "This is the last one." He bites down the last popsicle and shuts the door on the kid.

"Now we've got to get these aliens before someone gets abducted, or worse," said Mr X. Then, his stomach growls claiming a popsicle is not satisfying to him. "Okay, we need some real food," said Mr X. Jenny types in the best local restaurants and finds Thai Go near their

location. This made Mr X most pleased, "Jenny, Jenny, Jenny, you've done it again."

At Thai Go, Mr And Mrs Boonchuy were feeling so amped up from last night's encounter with the cloak bot. Sprig, Polly, and Hop pop were helping them prep the restaurant. "Is it just me, or is anyone feeling amped up since we fought the robot?" Mrs Boonchuy asked. "Kicked that robot's butt you mean," replied Mr Boonchuy. "Remember I was all Wa-Pow, and you were all Choo- Choo!"

"Sounds like you got a case of post battle euphoria," said Hop pop. "Nothing like a brush of death to make you feel alive," said Sprig.

Mr and Mrs Boonchuy were so excited to prepare for what comes next they asked about it. "So what's next? I'm ready to fight!" cheered Mrs Boonchuy. "Hopefully nothing," said Anne as she entered the kitchen. "Unless Andrias sends another robot, we're safe for now."

"So, Darrel and I are taking the Plantars and Tint to their first movie." Ever since Darrel announced that he and Anne started getting closer, Mr and Mrs Boonchuy were happy for their daughter. Especially with the boy that temporarily worked with them to pay off his debt. "Well I'm glad that you and Darrel are together," said Mrs Boonchuy.

"And if anything comes up, we're ready," said Mr Boonchuy. "I even broke out the old pull-up bar." Mr Boonchuy attempts to make one pull up. Only for the pull-up bar to snap in half and fall on his back. "Guys, please," said Anne. "Leave the danger to us okay?"

Then, Darrel enters the restaurant and calls for Anne and the Plantars. "Guys! I'm here!" he called. Mr Boonchuy limps his way to the counter and Mrs Boonchuy follows him. "There he is," groaned Mr Boonchuy. "Can we have a minute?" Mrs Boonchuy asked.

Darrel soon realized he knew where this was going to go. He nodded yes and stood in front of the counter. "Okay," said Darrel. At first he

was going to put his arms on the counter, but he wanted to be polite.

"We're just tickled pink about you and Anne," said Mr Boonchuy. "But not too pink," said Mrs Boonchuy. "Time to have a fam to Darrel talk." Darrel stood firm, "I'm listening." "We want Anne to be happy," said Mr Boonchuy. "That's what we all want," said Darrel. "Because if she's not happy," warned Mrs Boonchuy. "It'll be toilet duty for the restaurant the rest of your life."

Darrel backed up a few feet out of fear. "Mom! Please!" said Anne. "It's not a date if our friends are coming with us." "I know, I just want to make sure you all have fun," said Mrs Boonchuy. "If you guys have any problems, just call us," said Mr Boonchuy.

The group exit the restaurant and take their bikes to the movie theater. "And now," said Anne. "Movie time." They make their way to the location Super Cinemas Forty. Inside the movie plex, the amphibians gasp in amazement.

"Hello sensory overload," said Polly. "Woah, what is this, a church?" Hop pop asked. "Pretty much," said Anne. "This place is like a sanctuary to kids and teenagers," said Darrel. "We come here, enjoy the sweet scent of butter popcorn, and watch our movies in peace and quiet. The moment everything goes dark, nothing matters but the screen in front of you."

Anne takes Darrel's hand and says, "And the people you spend your time with." Darrel smiles, until he sees Anne start to frown. "What's wrong, Anne?" "I'm just thinking about my folks," replied Anne. "I don't like the idea of putting those two in harm's way. I know we took down that robot together but they're still just parents. They shop for groceries and coach little league tee ball."

Darrel smiled, "And my little sisters are still into sports and dancing. I don't want them to get hurt, but they'd do anything for me. They wanted to help me, so I'm letting them." He takes out his phone and shows Anne his last text message with his sisters. 'Keep the Boonchuy's company. Try not to break anything.'

Anne smiled, feeling a bit better knowing Darrel's sisters are helping her family. "Well," said Tint. "Luckily today is a stress free day with no danger or conflict." "Then let's go," said Darrel. "The movie's about to start."

Back at Thai Go, Amelia and Jane were in the dining room helping the Boonchuy's like they said they would. Then, the door opens revealing Mr X. Amelia and Jane didn't know what to expect, so they treated him like a regular customer. "Welcome to Thai Go," said Jane. "Dine in or Take out?"

"Why hello there you cute things," said Mr X. "I'll take it from here," said Mrs Boonchuy as she exited the kitchen. Mr X uses his wheelie shoes to approach the counter. The two greet with a little bit of Thai. "I was stationed in Phuket for a bit. We'll take one Pad see ew."

"And while we're at it," Mr X takes out a photo and shows it to Mrs Boonchuy. The photo reveals the Plantars and Tint screaming from the chase. "Have you seen any odd creatures walking around? Probably disguised as humans?"

Mrs Boonchuy stares in shock, realizing that the photo is legit. She sweats out a few droplets and says, "Hehehe, What strange shapes they are. Haven't seen them. Who's asking?"

Mr X decides to tell her who he is, "Oh just your friendly neighborhood, federal government." He shows her the federal badge, thus making Amelia And Jane gulp in fear.

"Yes, very nice," said Mrs Boonchuy. "Hooray government." Mr Boonchuy arrives with the food and gives it to Mr X. Just then, Jenny comes in showing Mr X that the string bean has been sighted with the Plantars and Tint.

Mr X pays the Boonchuys and takes the food. "Gotta go. Is your stun gun charged Jenny? Tell me it's charged!" Mr X takes out his stun gun and amps up the juice as they leave the restaurant.

Jane and Amelia stood in shock. "We have to help them!" Amelia shouted. "Get in the car," said Mrs Boonchuy. "I'll explain everything." The four get in Mr Boonchuy's car and make their way to the movie theater.

Amelia tries calling Darrel, while Mrs Boonchuy tries calling Anne. "Any luck?" Jane asked. "No," replied Mrs Boonchuy. "Come on, come on." The two try calling again, but to no avail.

On the other end of the phone line, Darrel and Anne's phones were silent. And of course they would be silent considering that they were watching the movie. The amphibians were gazing at the size of the screen.

Another movie trailer came on and that made Hop pop a little grouchy. "Twenty minutes of trailers? And you call yourselves uncivilized." Sprig leans back deep into his seat, feeling like he's being pushed back by the audio. "Does anyone else feel like this audio video experience is a little overwhelming?" he asked. "Probably," replied Tint. "Entertainment that makes your ears bleed?" Polly asked. "I'm here for it baby!"

"I have to admit," said Anne. "It is pretty difficult to hear anything." Darrel nods in agreement, and shares his popcorn with Anne. The two touched hands and blushed as they pulled away. But as the movie began, the two humans silently held hands and didn't let go.

Meanwhile, on the road, Jane, Amelia, and the Boonchuys were still not getting a response from Anne and Darrel. They continued to follow Mr X's undercover truck. "They're still not answering," said Amelia. "Maybe their movie just started," said Jane.

"Ugh, we're going to lose him in the traffic," said Mr Boonchuy. "That's because you drive like an old man," said Mrs Boonchuy. "Move over!" She takes the wheel and shifts to the curb of the freeway and speeds past the traffic. The girls were cheering in excitement while MR Boonchuy was freaked out.

They pass Mr X's truck and slow down in front of them to buy them some time. Mr X caught wind and thought it was reckless drivers. "Man, this city, I tell ya," he said to himself. He activates a secret button on the steering wheel causing the axles of the truck to reach high up and speed over the Boonchuy's car. The Boonchuy's and Darrel's sisters were most surprised by this shocking development.

After the movie ended, the group walked out. "Well it was no Suspicion Island," said Hop pop. "What did you say?!" Sprig shouted trying to get his hearing back. "I thought the protagonist was pretty fun," said Anne. "Especially her companion," said Darrel. "I liked that she was very flawed and had room to grow," said Anne. "And I liked that her friend allowed her to make her own choices, being aware of the consequences that follow," said Darrel.

The two of them suddenly realize that they're still holding hands, but they smile and don't let go. Anne reaches for her phone, and suddenly sees the texts her mom sent. 'Anne!' 'Secret Gov't Agent' 'Watch out for Ice Cream Truck!'

Just then, Mr X enters the theater, giving off a dramatic yet stylish posture. "Oh crud," said Anne. "You're telling me," said Darrel. "That is not your average ice cream vendor."

"Back inside, gang," said Anne, pushing her friends. "No, not another one," said Sprig. The group enter another movie screening just as Mr X catches a glimpse of them.

The group hid in a row of seats, hoping they didn't get caught. "Guys, there's a secret agent after us," said Anne. "We have to find a way out of this place without him-" Their hiding place gets compromised when they see Mr X sipping his soda.

"Tell me," he said. "Are you folks from the area? Or just visiting?" "Run!" Darrel cried. The group jumped out to make their escape. "Oh, how I love a good chase," said Mr X.

Mr X gives them a chase after leaving the screening. The group tried to hide behind the garbage can, then they took off back into the lobby after Mr X skated away from them.

"I think we lost him," said Hop pop. "Great," said Anne. "But don't stop." "Wait, stop!" Darrel shouted. The group stops to see Jenny checking the humans for any extraterrestrial signs. If they're clear of signs, they're clear to leave. If not, then the entire government would be on top of the new visitors.

"He's blocking the way," said Tint. "We're trapped." Anne's phone goes off, and answers it. "They're watching the exit," she said. "We need to find another way out." "We're coming in to help," said Mr Boonchuy. "No," said Anne, "I don't want you getting in trouble. We can handle it."

Darrel snatches her phone, "Give me that! Jane, Amelia, Boonchuys, when you get to the theater, don't come in. See if you guys can find a way to distract them, or find us another way out. Put me on speaker so my sisters can hear."

"Okay," said Mr Boonchuy. He tries to put the phone on speaker, "Okay, let's see. How do we do this?" As he taps his finger on the phone, a speed dial activates. Darrel hears an elderly woman speaking in Thailand. 'Do you know what time it is?'

"What the-?" Darrel removes the phone from his ear to show Anne the elderly woman. "Oops," said Mr Boonchuy. "I guess I accidentally-" 'Anne? Is that you?' asked the woman. 'I haven't seen you in ages. You look skinny! Have you been eating? Is that a boy? Are you on a date?'

"Hi Grandma," said Anne. "Yeah, I just had a sandwich. Mom, Dad, just stay in the car where it's safe!" "Anne," said Darrel. "They can help us! Just find another way out, and we'll meet you there." "Bye grandma, love you," said Anne as she ended her call.

The four humans enter the parking lot and observe the situation. "How do we get them out?" Mrs Bonochuy asked. "Me and Jane will go around the theater to find another way," said Amelia. "If we find something we'll text you."

Jane and Amelia take their leave to scour the perimeter, then Mr Boonchuy gets an idea. "I have an idea. Not only to get them out, but to deal with these agents too. Quick! To the pet store!" The Boonchuys drive away to go through with Mr Boonchuy's idea.

Back inside the theater, Anne, Darrel, the Plantars, and Tint were coming up with a plan of their own. However, their plan making came to a halt when they spot Mr X entering the lobby, taser in hand.

"Hide!" Anne shouted. The group race off while Mr X watches in thrill. "Well this is getting fun," he said.

The group entered a storage closet, but realized they were cornered. "Oh crud, it's a dead end," said Anne. But there was a poster of a movie called Dead End. "Ah, classic," said Hop pop. "Shh," said Tint. "Hide."

Just then, Mr X comes in and finds a silhouette of Hop pop in front of him. "Now what could this be?" He spins the silhouette around only to reveal it was a cardboard cutout of a character. "Now!" Darrel cried. Tint pushes over a couple of cutouts onto Mr X, and the group make their escape.

But Mr X was able to grab Tint by the leg and bring him into the light. Exposing his disguise in the process. "What even are you?" Mr X asked. "And why are you so slimy?" "It's not slime!" Tint shouted as he tried to muster a simple flame spell from his hands. "It's mucus!"

With little flame he has, he grabs Mr X by the hand and burns it in the process. He tries to blow it out, but Sprig knocks him in the head with a film reel and the group escape the closet.

Mr X leaves the closet and contacts Jenny. "Jenny, you are not going to believe this! They're big beautiful talking frog monsters! Call in the troops."

The group hid in one of the stalls in the bathrooms, trying to hide from plain sight. Darrel's phone vibrates and he answers, revealing it to be Jane. "Darrel, I think we've found another way to get you out of here."

"Great Jane, what is it?" Darrel asked. "There's a ventilation shaft that goes from the bathrooms to the dumpster outside. Can you get there?" "Funny enough, we're hiding in one right now," said Darrel. "Great," said Jane. "Do you see a vent above you guys?" Darrel looks up and sees one above him. "Yes, we'll meet you there," said Darrel.

Then, Anne's phone rings, and she answers her father. "Okay, so your mother and I have a plan to get you out," said Mr Boonchuy. "Darrel's sisters might have found an escape route already. This is a really good plan." "Don't worry," said Darrel. "We've found our escape route, we'll climb up without them catching us, while you go in with your plan." An innocent bystander hears the whole thing and feels awkward, "Man, this city I tell you."

However, as they prepare their plan, the entire police squad enters the parking lot. FBI troops come rushing in with dog catcher equipment and nets. Jane and Amelia come back to give the Boonchuys the news. "They're in the bathroom," said Amelia. "Are you all ready?" Mrs Boonchuy asked. "Born ready," replied Mr Boonchuy. They get out their tools and put their plan in place.

The FBI and Jenny enter the theater and find Mr X waiting in front of the women's restroom. "They're in there," said Mr X. "Come on, everyone. Showtime!" The squad breaks down the door and MR X says, "Let's grab ourselves some frog aliens."

The FBI squad breaks down every stall only for the power to go off. Every member was confused until Mr X pulled out a flashlight. He

shines on the open stall revealing two frogs and a tadpole on top of the toilet seat.

The FBI Squad was laughing at Mr X's reveal, leaving him upset and embarrassed. "Looks like our little friends are smarter than I thought," he said. "We're going to have fun with this one Jenny, and we'll have the last laugh!"

Back outside the theater, the group escapes from the ventilation shaft guided by Jane. "That plan was amazing," said Darrel. "Dad, Mom, how did you do that?" Anne asked. "Well, parents have a special set of skills," replied Mrs Boonchuy.

"While Darrel's sisters were finding another way out of the movie theater," said Mr Boonchuy. "Anne's mother bought us some time." "At the same time," said Mrs Boonchuy. "Your father got the frogs at the pet store down the street. And remember when we tried to fix the electricity?" "Yeah," replied Anne. "Wasn't that a disaster?" "Yep," said Mr Boonchuy. "We knew exactly what *not* to do."

The group was astounded by their plan and how well it was pulled off. "You guys seriously did all of that?" Anne asked. "I can't believe it." "I can," replied Darrel. "Because I wanted to trust them the way they trust me."

"I'm sorry I misjudged you guys," said Anne. "It's okay sweetie," said Mr Boonchuy. "We forgive you," said Mrs Boonchuy. "And besides we knew you were in good hands. Darrel's a great boyfriend. He stood by your side especially when things got rough." "We can't thank you enough for being there for our daughter," said Mr Boonchuy.

Darrel smiled with glee as he held Anne's hand, making the two teens blush. "Wait a minute," said Anne. "How did Jane and Amelia know which bathroom we were in?" "Because we play communications using that vent," said Amelia. "We knew it would lead straight to the girls bathroom." "Wait," said Darrel. "THAT WAS THE GIRL'S BATHROOM!?"

"Plus, we may have known from the tracking device we put on Hop pop when he was sleeping," said Mr Boonchuy. Hop pop removes his shirt and reveals the tracking device taped on his chest. "I was wondering what that was," he said. "WHAT?!" Anne shouted. Polly quickly removes the tracker causing Hop pop to scream from the stinging sensation of tape quickly removed from his chest.

I can't wait for Amphibia and the Owl House to come back next month. I hope you guys are catching wind of what my message is. Let's find out what we've got so far.

THE TALE OF _ _ _. By the end of the season, we'll get to see what's next.

Two Birthdays, One Surprise

Chapter 55 - Two Birthdays, One Surprise

Back in Anne's bedroom, Anne was reading Dante's inferno while Darrel was reading the Hobbit. Tint was reading the first Cynthia Coven book. He started to feel more depressed than before. The idea that he couldn't perform magic anymore made him feel weak. If he was to go up against Andrias, he'd want to be ready.

"So how's the book Anne?" Darrel asked. "I'd give Dante's Inferno a B plus for story, and a F minus for helping them get home," replied Anne. "How about your book?" "Great story, but not a lot of wizards," said Darrel. "He only appears when the group needs it. What about you Tint?"

Darrel turns to see Tint reach out like he's performing a spell, but nothing happens. Tint doesn't respond to his call. "Tint? Tint? Tint!" Tint snaps out of his zone and comes back like he's waking up. "Huh? Wha? Eh? What is it Darrel? I'm trying to concentrate."

"I'm sorry Tint," said Darrel. "You look like you've had it rough." "I just need to work harder if I'm ever going to get my powers back," said Tint. "I can't fail." Anne grows weary, "I'm not sure you should practice magic in my house," she said. "I know what I'm doing!" Tint snapped. "Leave me alone."

"Okay," said Anne. "So Sprig, how's it going on your end?" "Pretty good," said Sprig. "I really think I'm getting somewhere." He was shown sitting on top of a sculpture made from Anne's books.

Darrel smirked, "Sprig, books are meant to be read, not sculpted." "It's a giraffe," said Sprig. "I can see that," said Tint. "Okay, I can see we need a break," said Anne. "Finger Football anyone?" "Sure," said Darrel. "You know it," said Sprig. "You in Tint?" Anne asked. "Count me out," said Tint. "I need to focus."

Darrel, Sprig, and Anne take a moment to play finger football, while Tint continues reading and focusing on his magic. Then Hop pop and Polly enter with suspicious looks on their faces. Darrel took notice and shrugged.

"Okay, I'll bite," he said. "What's going on?" "Oh nothing," said Polly. "We're just looking for a place to put this mud crown!" Polly and Hop pop reveal a mud crown made fresh, possibly from the backyard. "What is that?" Anne asked. "What's going on?"

"Well," said Hop pop. "In Amphibia, it's customary to put a mud crown on somebody's head when it's their birthday!" "What!" Anne gasped. "What?!" Darrel exclaimed. Tint turned his head in silence and shock, dropping his book in the process. Polly and Hop pop sing their traditional birthday song to Sprig.

"Sprig Plantar," said Darrel. "Today's your birthday?" "It sure is," replied Sprig. "I had no idea it was your birthday," said Anne. "Don't worry about it guys," shrugged Sprig. "I don't think I ever mentioned it." Darrel shook his head, "No, you didn't."

Anne immediately lunged in front of Sprig, "I'm your friend! I'm supposed to know these things." She then decided to drop everything. "Well we're not doing anymore research today. We're doing whatever folksy frog traditions you do. What have you got?"

"Well," said Hop pop. "The mud crown represents every frog's humble beginning as an egg, in the muddy waters in the swamp." "And all that's left is for the birthday frog to wear his crown, and reflect," said Polly.

"Reflect?" Anne asked. "On his life," replied Hop pop. "until this point." Then the group watches Sprig bask in the sunlight reflecting on his own life and how far he's come. Darrel could feel the memories he had with him flow in his heart. Tint however, kept his eyes shut and turned away.

"Okay, all done," said Sprig. "Welp," said Hop pop. "That's that, Hoppy birthday Sprig." "Oh, that reminds me," said Sprig. "Tomorrow is someone else's birthday." "Really? Who?" Darrel asked. "It's-" "Wait hold on!" said Anne. "That's all you frogs do for your honking birthdays?!"

"Yes," said Hop pop. "This is starting to feel culturally insensitive." "Unacceptable," said Anne. "Birthdays should be fun, and memorable. Especially when you're turning..." Anne begins to realize that she doesn't know how old Sprig is. And trying to guess his age is only gut wrenching to watch.

Darrel sighs, "How old are you Sprig?" "Eleven," replied Sprig. "Of course eleven," said Anne. "And I knew that because I'm your friend. And this friend is about to give you the best birthday you've ever had in your life! Capiche?!"

"Okay, that was creepy," said Tint. "Well I'm intrigued," said Sprig. "A little scared but intrigued. Let's do it!" Sprig tosses the mud crown outside the window and he, Tint, Darrel, and Anne race out to their bikes.

They ride down the road, with Sprig riding in Anne's basket, and Tint riding in Darrel's backpack. "I can't believe Polly and Hop pop didn't want to share this basket with me," said Sprig. "I feel perfectly sa-" Then the two bikers hit a few potholes along the way.

"Listen up," said Anne. "Earth birthdays are about fun, presents, cake. It's basically a day that means you tell people what to do, and get what you want." "Actually Sprig," said Darrel. "Birthdays are mostly about spending your special day with the people who care about you." "Wow," said Sprig. "In Amphibia, it's all about respecting those around you and being grateful for the time you have left alive."

"Man, talk about brainwashing," said Anne. "What do you think, Tint?" Tint remained silent and pointed his face away from Anne and Sprig. "Maybe he just doesn't want to talk," said Darrel. "He's been a

little upset lately." "Okay," said Anne. "Earth birthday montage engage!"

For the rest of the day, Anne and Darrel show Sprig around to see how humans celebrate their birthdays. They return to the mall to get Sprig dressed up with birthday gear. They go to the boardwalk to ride on the rides. They paddle in the swan boats, ride on the merry go round, go sightseeing, even go to the planetarium. Tint was standing in the background feeling very gloomy, but he didn't want the others to notice.

Anne stashes a gift she recently got for Sprig and hid it in her jacket pocket. "So how did you like the observatory, Sprig?" Darrel asked. "That place had everything," replied Sprig. "Big telescopes, crazy contraptions, and I made a new friend." "He wasn't a friend," said Anne. "That was security yelling at you to get off the telescope."

"Pssh, Anne on your Earth birthday, everyone is your friend," said Sprig. "Now you're getting it," said Anne as they got on her bike. Then, Darrel takes notice that Tint is still feeling under the weather. So under, he keeps trying to practice his magic. "Tint, are you okay?" Darrel asked. Tint took a deep breath and rubbed his face. "Sure," he replied. "Come on, let's go."

The four bike their way down the path being greeted by on-goers to see the birthday balloons. "That was fun," said Sprig. "Thanks for an incredible birthday guys. You know, at first I couldn't understand why you make birthdays so special. And now I get it! Today was amazing."

"I'm glad you enjoyed today, Sprig," said Darrel. "So, was it the best birthday you ever had?" Anne asked. "Oh definitely top three," said Sprig.

Anne suddenly stops her bike, and Darrel stops shortly after. "What!? That's it?" Anne cried. "I pull out all the stops and I'm still third place over a couple of mud crowns?!" "Anne, I think the other two birthdays mean more than just mud crowns," said Darrel. "Well

this will not stand," said Anne. "It is my duty as Sprig's friend to keep the party going until it's in the number one spot!"

"Haven't we done everything by this point?" Tint asked. "Yeah, Anne," said Darrel. "There's literally nothing left for us to do." Anne turns around to find an advertisement for a hot air balloon ride and fireworks show. "Not everything," said Anne smirking.

Later, Mr Boonchuy and Matthew drop them off at the parking lot. "Thanks dad. Thanks Mr Loyalitat," said Anne. "Be back soon." "No worries," said Mr Boonchuy. "We'll just be over here reading great american literature." The two take out a couple of books and read quietly in the car.

The four friends arrive where the hot air balloons were getting ready to launch. "Woah, we get to ride in one of these?" Sprig asked. "Welcome my friend, to paradiso," said Anne. Shortly after, a small firework goes off early by accident. Tint sees the fireworks and suddenly stares in shock.

"What was that?" Sprig asked. "Just some nut who set off a firework display too early," said Darrel. "They don't go off until later tonight." "I'm going to get a bird's eye view of another world, in a flying machine that's powered by fire? And watch colorful fireworks go off later tonight!? Woohoo!"

Sprig races to the balloons until he screams in horror. Anne and Darrel follow behind him after they hear him scream. They scream too seeing an evil clown balloon facing them.

Then, another clown pops out of the basket. "Don't be startled, child. This balloon only looks scary because it was repurposed for a horror movie promotional piece." "How could you think it was a good idea?" Anne asked. "We weren't about to waste a perfectly good clown balloon," replied the clown. "Anyways, the name's Blair the Balloonist. I take it you're here for the birthday package?"

Sprig nodded, "I'm eleven now." "Well hop aboard explorers," said Blair as he opened the basket. Just then, Darrel turns around to see Tint still frozen in shock. His eyes started swelling up, which made Darrel very concerned. "Tint. You okay?" Darrel asked.

Tint just shed a small tear and then ran away from the balloons. Darrel grew worried. "Tint!" Darrel cried. "You guys go ahead and enjoy the balloon ride, I'm going to see what's wrong with Tint."

"Okay, but hurry back," said Anne. Darrel raced through the balloons hoping to catch up with his salamander friend. At the same time, Blair's weather alert goes off. Reports of high winds were being alerted, causing the balloons to cancel their flights. However, the fireworks show would still arrive on schedule.

Anne and Sprig were disappointed by the sudden cancelation of the balloons, but that didn't stop Anne from causing her sto scheme her way into trouble again. They get in the basket as an excuse to feel what it's like to fly in a balloon. Only for Anne to bring the balloon off the ground and into the air.

"Isn't this a bit risky?" Sprig asked. "Relax," replied Anne. "We're still tethered to the ground. What's the worst that could happen? Now come on, let's seal the deal and make this the best birthday ever!" Sprig cheered, and the two gazed in magnificence as the sun set on Los Angeles.

Their amazing moment of glory was suddenly halted when a big gust of wind snapped off the tether, causing them to float into the city. Blair catches wind of them in the air and groans, "I am so getting fired for this." He honks his nose twice.

Anne and Sprig were screaming across the city, with Anne controlling the altitude and Sprig steering the balloon with his tongue. They overcame the obstacles, but the one they couldn't get past was a flock of geese.

Inside a building, a therapy session was in process. "Well doc, I think you've done it," said the patient. "I think you've cured me of my fear of direct eye contact-" Just as he finished the sentence, the evil clown balloon passed by. Causing the patient to flip over the table in a state of panic, and run off.

Outside, a skywriting plane wrote a message saying, 'Will you marry me?' While down below, a proposal was being made. "Look behind you," said the first male partner. His partner turns around to see the message only for the clown balloon to block the word 'marry'. "No Tyler, I will not clown face you," said Tyler's male partner.

Later on, the two fly right into a crane that has a large point on the end. With no way to stop or steer, the two jump for it. They land on a palm tree, which flings them onto a mattress tied to a car, which shoots them to a hotdog stand, which makes them grab onto a fire escape ladder. The ladder breaks free, and the two fall into a garbage dump.

"Now that was a horror show," said Sprig. "Welp, I ruined your birthday," said Anne depressingly. "After all this time I thought I would be a better friend than this." "How so?" Sprig asked. "Hello! I didn't even know it was your birthday," replied Anne. "I thought I could make it up to you with the craziest day ever, but it looks like I'm just a failure through and through."

"Friend punch!" Sprig shouted as he launched his tongue onto Anne's face. "Wow, it's been a while since that happened," she said. "Anne, you're my best friend because I love being with you," said Sprig. "Not because you knew what day I was born. And this birthday isn't in the top three because of the crazy stuff we did. It's in the top three because we got to spend it together."

Anne was so moved by her friend's speech, "That's like the sweetest thing anyone's ever said. Thanks man." The two hug it out, making this one of Sprig's best birthdays ever. "Okay I've got to know," said Anne. "What are your top two birthdays?" "Birthday number one was the day I was actually born and given life," replied Sprig. "And

number two was when Mom and Dad gave me my hat. My memory is a little fuzzy, but it's an iconic hat, right?" The two make their way back home and Anne gives Sprig a telescope engraved with his and Anne's names on it.

Meanwhile, Darrel was still trying to catch up with Tint; he almost lost sight of him when they entered the park. Tint bails on his disguise, considering no one was around at this time of night. Darrel looks around trying to find him, until he spots him sitting on the bench feeling sad.

This made Darrel feel sad too and he sat down next to him. "Hey Tint," said Darrel in a gloomy tone. "Hey Darrel," replied Tint. "Look, I'm fine. I just lost interest in spending another minute on Sprig's birthday."

Darrel had a feeling why the subject of birthdays made Tint upset. So he decided to ask, "Are you upset about birthdays because you never got one like Sprig's?" Tint shook his head, "No, I'm upset because my birthday was always special because I share my birthday with Uncle Cronaxx's birthday."

"You and Cronaxx share the same birthday?" Darrel asked. Tint nodded, "Spending time with Sprig made all my memories flood back in my head. The way me and Uncle Cronaxx spend our time together. And our birthday always ends when he erupts the sky with his beautiful fireworks."

"And that's why you stopped when the fireworks went off," said Darrel. "They brought back the highlight of your birthday." Tint nodded silently. "And all this time when you were attempting to perform magic, it was to get away from remembering the joy that birthdays brought you."

"And tomorrow's my birthday," said Tint on the verge of tears. "My birthdays are going to be different from now on, because Uncle Cronaxx can't..." And with that, Tint started to cry his heart out. He was quiet enough so passing walkers couldn't hear him. Darrel

hugged his poor salamander friend and comforted him. "I'm so sorry, buddy," said Darrel.

Just then, a glowing blue orb came floating down behind them. The two didn't take notice with them mourning, but the orb split in two and phased into their heads. "Listen, Tint," said Darrel. "Birthdays are meant to be spent with the people who care about you. You're like a brother to me, and I want to spend it with you. However you want to spend it."

Tint smiled at the idea, "I just want to spend the day quietly with you and your family." Darrel smiled, and the two got up to go home. "Our family Tint," said Darrel. "You saved my mom, you're one of us now."

That night, when everyone was asleep. Darrel calmly started tossing and turning. In his dream, he was swimming in the lake, breathing with the fish underwater. Darrel was happy, until he started hearing whispers. The whispers led him into a glowing cove, and the voice grew stronger the closer he got. The cove glows brighter and the voice rang clear in his head. "Look to the waters."

The next morning, the Loyallit's were discussing ways on how to celebrate Tint's birthday over breakfast. "We could go for a flight over Los Angeles," said Matthew. "Or we could watch the Lakers at the Crypto Center," said Amelia. "Or watch a performance at the Dolby Theater," said Jane. "What do you want to do, Tint?" Sarah asked.

"I just want to enjoy the view at a lake," said Tint. "I know a good place where we could go," said Darrel. "The Encino Reservoir. Our grandfather loved to go there vacationing with us." "That's not a bad idea," said Matthew. "Let's finish up and make tracks, it's going to be a long ride."

Thankfully, that ride felt short for Tint. Considering he's played road games with Darrel, Jane, and Amelia. The family park near the lake and enjoy the scenery. Tint and Darrel drew their attention to the lake and got a good look at themselves in their reflection.

"Darrel," said Sarah. "Is Tint going to be okay?" "This is his first birthday without Cronaxx," whispered Darrel. "Just give him time to adjust." "What does it mean?" Tint asked. "Was it just a dream? What was I thinking?"

"What do you mean?" Jane asked. "I just had a crazy dream where a strange voice told me to look down at the lake," said Tint. "I must be crazy." "You know," said Jane. "When grandpa died, Mom and Dad always sang my favorite song from my favorite musical. Whenever I hear that song, I sing along with them, and it makes me feel better." "How did it go?" Tint asked.

(He Lives in You - The Lion King)

(Jane gets in a starting pose, as if she was about to dance for an audience)

Jane:

Ingonyama nengw' enamabala

Ingonyama nengw' enamabala

Night and the spirit of life calling mamela

And a voice just the fear of a child answers mamela

(Tint was stunned, remembering that same melody he heard long ago. Darrel instantly recognized the melody and smiled.)

Ubu khosi bo khokho We ndodana ye sizwe sonke

Wait, there's no mountain too great

Hear the words and have faith

(Tint and Darrel look back down in their own reflections)

Have faith

He lives in you

(Tint instantly remembers his Uncle's words, looking up to the sky smiling.)

He lives in me

He watches over

Everything we see

Into the water

Into the truth

In your reflection

(Tint looks back down in the water and sees the reflection of Cronaxx.)

He lives in you

The glowing blue orb leaves Darrel and Tint's heads and grows brighter and brighter. Gaining the family's attention. "What's that?" Amelia asked. The orb starts to take shape, and finally speaks. "Tint, Darrel." The two boys were shocked. "Cronaxx?" The orb dims a bit and reveals its true form, as Tint's recently fallen Uncle Cronaxx.

"Hello, Loyalitat Family," said Cronaxx. "Oh my god," said Darrel. "Cronaxx! You're- You're a..." "Ghost," replied Cronaxx. "Yes, that's correct." "Can you make ghost sounds?" Cronaxx nodded, "I can. I can do a lot of things. But magic is not one of them. Not anymore."

"But why are you here?" Amelia asked. "To help my nephew," replied Cronaxx. "Uncle..." said Tint. "I'm so sorry." "Tint," said Cronaxx. "You must take your place in the circle of life."

Tint looked down feeling hopeless. "I can't," he replied. "I'm not who I used to be anymore." "You must remember who you are," said

Cronaxx. "A powerful and wise wizard." Tint looks up to Cronaxx and looks down again, seeing him as a ghost.

"I'm sorry," said Tint. "You were my teacher. How can I be like you, when I don't know everything you know?" Cronaxx smiled and placed his hand on his cheek. "As a wizard, I was most proud of only one thing: Having you as my nephew." "Wasn't that a long time ago?" Tint asked. "It can't be," replied Darrel. "He's right," said Cronaxx. "That is forever."

"I don't want to be alone," whimpered Tint. "You're not alone," said Darrel. "I never left you two," said Cronaxx. "I never will. Now remember who you are."

After a while, Tint looks back on his life. He goes back to the day he was hatched, to the day he first performed magic, to his Uncle training him under his guidance. Then, meeting Darrel for the first time, to the adventures he had with him, Anne, the Plantars, and the people of Wartwood. Tint looks up to his ghostly uncle with a smile.

"So, who are you, young salamander?" Sarah asked. Tint looks back to the family and says, "I am Tint Tormak: Great Nephew, and student of the Great Cronaxx, the Salamandrian Wizard."

Tint takes his hands and performs a basic light spell. And much to Darrel's surprise, Tint's magic appeared to be working again. And with much more in store. Tint smiles seeing his powers back, he goes to hug Darrel. "Thank you, Darrel. For everything," he said. "You're welcome," said Darrel.

"Now let's get home and celebrate your birthday," said Cronaxx. "You mean you're staying?" Tint asked. "Only until my unfinished business is complete," replied Cronaxx. "And I think I know what it is," said Darrel, smiling.

Loyalitat Family:

He lives in you

He lives in me
He watches over
Everything we see
Into the water
Into the truth
In your reflection
He lives in you
He lives in you

Jane & Tint:

He lives in me
He watches over
Everything we see
Into the water
Into the truth
In your reflection
He lives in you

Meanwhile, back at the Loyalitat residence, Darrel's staff is on the verge of losing its color. And Darrel didn't even notice that his powers were starting to fade away. But that didn't matter to him, because all that mattered now was that Cronaxx is back as a guiding spirit, and Tint has his powers back.

Heroes and Villains

Chapter 56 - Heroes and Villains

Anne, Mr Boonchuy, and the Plantars were watching a hero movie in the living room. The movie shows a storm over what looks like New York City. On top of the Empire State building, Tarantulad the hero was fighting against his archenemy, Bufferfish.

"In the name of justice," said Tarantulad. "Your rein of terror is over Bufferfish!" "Why fight me, Tarantula?" Bufferfish asked. "When you should join me?"

Tarantulad was stunned, "What?" "Like me you'll never be accepted in this world," said Bufferfish. "If that is my fate," said Tarantulad in a fighting stance. "Then so be it!" Tarantulad lunges at Bufferfish and punches him in the gut. "You will never be loved," said Bufferfish before he exploded.

Tarantulad falls from the building to the street below, where a crowd of people were watching them. His helmet falls off revealing his true identity to the public. "All this time.." "He's a monster." Tarantulad feels heartbroken until a little girl cheers him up. "I don't care what you are," she said. "To me, you're a hero."

The crowd applauded and Tarantulad looked up to the sky. "Mother, Father, I've finally found my home," he said. As the credits rolled, Sprig and Mr Boonchuy were crying. "That was Tarantulad," said Mr Boonchuy. "The World called home, quite possibly the finest film ever made." "I, I've never seen anything like that! So moving! So, inspiring!" said Sprig. He jumps to look out the window. "I wish I could be lovingly embraced by all of humanity," he said.

Anne wouldn't allow that, "No can do dude. Low profile remember?" "I know I know," said Sprig. "But it's not fair. You and Darrel got to

make your mark in Amphibia." "That's because in Amphibia, we weren't in hiding," said Anne. "Fine," groaned Sprig.

Just then, Darrel and Tint came bursting through the door. "Guys, guys, guys, guys, guys! You're not going to believe this!" Darrel cried. "Woah, Darrel. What's going on?" Hop pop asked.

Darrel closed the door and made sure that the windows were shut. "I've got great news," said Darrel. "It's better if I showed you." Darrel reaches his hand out into the air and a blue glow appears in thin air. The glow reveals itself to be Cronaxx, causing the Plantars to gasp. Mr Boonchuy however, was scared out of his mind. "A g-g-g-GHOST!" He hightails it out of the living room and into his bedroom.

"Guess I have that effect on others," said Cronaxx. "Cronaxx? You're back?!" Polly cried. "I thought you were gone," said Hop pop. "I never left," said Cronaxx. "And that's not all," said Tint. "Because I faced my problems, I was able to get my powers back." Tint performs a light spell, much more powerful than before.

"Wow, where did that come from?" Polly asked. "It's because I'm growing up," said Tint. "As I grow, so do my powers. And I'm going to maintain them somehow." "As long as it's not out in public," said Anne. "Still, it's great to see you again Cronaxx." "Indeed," he said.

"We just watched a hero movie," said Polly. "To be fair, that movie was stuffed with predictable tropes and lazy writing." "Writing is not lazy," said Tint. "We have got to cut back on her internet use," said Hop pop.

"So Cronaxx, how does it feel being a ghost?" Anne asked. "Honestly, nothing," said Cronaxx. The group laughed at his joke, while Sprig headed up to the attic. Tint takes notice and follows him.

Tint finds Sprig looking at his hands. "He was just a mild mannered frog-boy who never made a fuss," said Sprig. He was talking to himself which made Tint a little worried. "But he was destined to be something more."

Sprig starts to climb on the walls, while Tint's ooze begins glowing a new shade of blue colors. Tint smiled at his newly developed abilities and was curious about what he could do with them. "Who knows how long he's got left on Earth. But it's time to put his mark on the world and be adored by all!" said Sprig.

"Are you with me Tint?" Sprig asked. "If it'll help me train my new powers, I'm in," replied Tint. The two gather resources for costumes in order to stay out of sight of the people of Los Angeles. They use Anne's sewing machine and clothes to make superhero suits. Sprig wears a ski mask over his head with his goggles covering his eyes. Tint wears the same thing, but with a cape. "Alright Earth," said Sprig. "Get ready to meet Frog-Man!" "And Professor Weird," said Tint.

Polly, Darrel, and Cronaxx enter the bedroom to see the two in heroic poses. "What's going on?" Darrel asked. "We're fulfilling our destinies as your neighborhood superheroes," said Sprig. "More like attention seekers," said Polly. "The only thing I seek is justice," said Sprig. "Hop up and away!"

The two jump out of Anne's window and Darrel, Cronaxx and Polly watch them go. "You think Tint is going to keep his powers hidden to the public?" Darrel asked. "He was like that when he first found out he got magic abilities," replied Cronaxx. "Let him go. If he gets into trouble, he'll fix it on his own."

"Here we are," said Sprig. "Guardians of the city. No evil shall escape my gaze." "And no crime will go unnoticed with my powers," said Tint. He uses his abilities to make ancient runes appear from his hands. Those runes make him see trouble the instant it occurs.

"Alright, I'm writing you kids up," said an elderly stranger on roller blades. "You kids need a permit to sell goods on this street." He writes up a ticket to the kids selling lemonade in front of their house. "Mom's going to hate us for this," said the boy. "Dude, we're eight," said the girl.

Tint hops into the scene, keeping his powers in check. "Is everything alright here?" he asked. The man laughed at his costume. "Ha! Who are you? Some kind of masked vigilante?" "I am my good man," replied Tint. "So am I," said Sprig. "We are Frog-man and Professor Weird. Ribbiers of Justice!"

"Well these streets don't need you," said the man. "Because they've got me, Robert Otto: Neighborhood Safety Supervisor." "Well how is selling lemonade without a permit a safety hazard?" Tint asked. "They're just offering drinks to ongoing pedestrians."

"Listen kids," said Robert. "This neighborhood ain't big enough for the three of us, and I was here first. So get lost." "Hey I don't want to fight you," said Sprig. "Neither do I," said Tint. "We only fight injustice."

Suddenly, they hear a scream. "Someone's in trouble," they said. Then they make their way to the scene of the crime. Tint still had to keep his powers hidden, considering the fact that Robert was following them. "This neighborhood's finally hit rock bottom," said the girl.

A school bus came rushing down the road at high speeds. The brake lines were broken and children's lives were at stake. Robert Otto skates in front of the bus, in an attempt to stop it. Only for the bus to knock him off his feet and land on the hood.

Tint uses his new rune powers to slow down the bus. Sprig makes a tongue web in case the bus doesn't stop. The plan worked, the bus slowed down and touched Sprig's tongue. No casualties were reported.

"Oh my gosh, those kids did it," cheered a bystander. "What heroes!" "Hey what about me?" Robert asked. "I slowed the bus down first." "How did you two do that?" asked a citizen. "We were just practicing special effects for an independent movie," said Tint. He knew it was a lie, but he also knew the people would buy the fact that a movie was being filmed.

Just then, a girl came out of the bus. She was wearing school clothes, black boots, a watch, and had hair color streaks in her blonde hair. "Molly Joe?" Robert asked. "You were on that bus? Thank goodness you're safe." Robert knew Molly Joe, and reached out for a hug. But Molly Joe ran past him to see the masked vigilantes.

"Thank you Frog-man and Professor Weird," said Molly Joe. She reaches out to shake their hands, and the two accept. "For saving me and my grandpa Robert." "Oh, that man's your grandfather?" Tint asked. "Well I'm glad he's safe."

The crowd cheered for their act of bravery, but Robert turned away in anger. "Stupid vigilanties," he grumbled. Tint looks at Robert turning away, and feels a bit sorry for the guy. He remembers back to what Cronaxx told him when he used his powers for the first time. 'With great power comes great responsibility.'

Tint walks up to Robert, hoping to make things right. "Excuse me Robert? I didn't want to upstage you from the start. I wanted to step up, to do the right thing. That's what a real hero does." "Are you saying I'm not a hero?" Robert asked. He glares down at Tint. "Because I assure you, this won't be the last time you see me." Tint tries to talk to him, but he skates too fast. "I never said you're not a hero!" he shouted.

The rest of the day, Tint and Sprig were on patrol looking for people to help around the city. Their good deeds caught wind with the media nationwide. This got Darrel and Anne's attention as well. Cronaxx smiled, but looked outside growing weary of how much attention they're receiving. Darrel and Anne however, were quite the opposite of happy. "SPRIG!" "TINT!"

Meanwhile in the city junkyard, Robert Otto was scrolling through articles involving Frog-Man and Professor Weird. He was fuming over their good deeds all over the neighborhood. "I've been taking care of this neighborhood for years," he growled. "And what do I get? NOTHING!"

While coming up with a plan to stop the duo of heroes, he stumbles across the robotic arm of the old cloak bot. "It looks like some kind of high tech mechanical arm," he said. He stretches it out, satisfying the human. "Surprisingly light, yet so powerful and a perfect fit. This must be fate! And it looks like fate wants me to squash those vigilantes." Robert Otto takes the arm and starts smashing up old cars for practice.

The very next day, Sprig and Tint were greeted by the cheering citizens. Sprig was basking in their glory. Tint however, didn't feel like he wanted it in the first place. "Yes, Yes! Adore me," said Sprig. "Frog-man," said Tint. "Don't you think there's such a thing as too much attention? We're supposed to be keeping a low profile."

"Nonsense Professor Weird," said Sprig. "These people love us!" Tint crossed his arms. "But do they love the real us?" he asked. "Cause I assure you there are people who won't. Let's just leave." "No way," said Sprig. They are offered a pizza by the citizens, but then the robotic arm snatches it away from them. "It can't be," whispered Tint.

"Halt fiend!" shouted a familiar voice. Tint sighed in relief, "Oh thank goodness. I thought that robot was back." The arm retracted with the pizza, revealing Robert Otto. This time, he's wearing goggles, a green scarf, and a brown jacket with the right arm torn off because of his robot hand.

"Scoundrels like you deserve no such zahr," he said, crunching the pizza. "Robert Otto?" Tint asked. "Is that you?" "Indeed," he replied. "Now, let's settle this."

Robert takes his arm and lunges at Sprig and Tint. The two dodged the attack, and the crowd began to scatter. "Yes!" Sprig cheered. "Our very own super villain!" "Frog-Man, the last thing we want is enemies!" Tint exclaimed. "We already have enough of them as it is."

"Your popularity contest is over," said Robert as he crushed a rock. "This is a battle for the soul of a city. A battle I intend to win!" Robert

attacks again, grabbing a nearby car. "I never wanted a battle to begin with," said Tint. "I just wanted to help people. You want this city? You can have it! I just want to go home."

"Too late for that," said Robert. He takes the car and slams it down on the heroes. Tint uses his magic to block the attack, and Sprig uses his tongue to swing on a lamp post. "You both are a bunch of warts on the face of this city," said Robert. "Get ready for some laser surgery!"

Robert takes his arm and fires the laser from it. Sprig dodges and Tint blocks. Both amphibians attempt to run away from the maniac of a human, but Robert is determined to rid the city of them. After a few blows and dodges, the crowd runs away from all the damage they were causing.

Having enough, Tint magically turns himself invisible for a short period of time. He retreats near the coffee shop, where Molly Joe steps out. "Molly Joe?" Tint asked. "Who said that?" she asked. "It's me," said Tint as he turns visible again. "Professor Weird, what's going on?"

"That's what's going on," Tint points to the fight, and a car slams right next to them. Robber and Sprig keep the fight going, with Robert throwing public property and cars at the amphibian. He nearly crushes Molly Joe, but Tint pulls her out of the way. The car hits the lamp post and Tint stops it from falling on them.

Knowing that things are going too far, Tint shouted, "ALRIGHT! EVERYBODY STOP! Robert Otto and Sprig immediately stop fighting, and turn to the disguised salamander. "This has gone too far," said Tint. "You almost killed her!" he points to Molly Joe with a disappointed face. "You saved my granddaughter?" Robert asked. "From you, and from us," replied Tint.

"Look at what we were doing." Tint points to the streets, damaged with potholes, crushed cars, and crowds scared for their lives. "You

say you want to protect the city. Well, is this what you call protection? Fighting each other? Endangering innocent lives? I'm disappointed."

Sprig and Robert survey the scene of their big fight, realizing that Tint was right. "What have I done?" "That's a lot of property damage." "I don't believe this," said Molly Joe. "I thought Frog-Man was cool. But you're both just destructive attention seekers. Why couldn't you listen to Professor Weird?"

"Wait," said Sprig, stopping Molly from taking another step. "Professor Weird is right. You're right too. I was selfish. If I really wanted to help people, there were better ways."

"You're darn right," said Molly Joe. "Yeah, I'm sorry too," said Robert. "We'll clean this up stat!" Tint smiled, "Now that's what I call doing the right thing." He prepares the magic from his hands, and the trio clean up the streets.

Surprisingly, thanks to their teamwork, the streets were safe to walk again. Molly Joe was on her phone until Tint and Sprig reached out for friendship. "Are we still friends?" Tint asked. Molly Joe smiled, "Of course." The three shake hands, only for Sprig and Molly to be stuck from Sprig's ooze again. "And that's why I wear gloves," laughed Tint.

The two amphibians take their leave, then Molly Joe stops them. "Hey, can I see your faces?" she asked. "A generous offer," said Tint. "But some things are best kept secret." "He's right," said Sprig. "Besides, it will give you nightmares. And those nightmares would puke." The two amphibians leave and Robert gets taken to jail.

Along the way, Sprig decides to break the silence between him and Tint. "I'm really sorry I didn't listen to you Tint," he said. "I should've kept a low profile like you said." Tint smiled, "It's okay, Sprig. You took responsibility for your actions and you cleaned up your mess."

"Hey, at least you got to use your powers again," said Sprig. "Cronaxx told me I should use my powers only when I have to," said

Tint. "After all, with great power comes great responsibility."

"Your uncle gives the best advice," said Sprig. "Even when he's a ghost." Tint smiled again, "The lessons he taught me keeps his spirit alive. But it was great I got my magic back, and then some," said Tint. "You know Sprig, next to Darrel, you're my best friend ever."

Sprig smiled, "Thanks Tint." He offers him a fist bump. "So what do you say? Sprint against the world?" Tint fistbumps him, "Sprint against the world."

Back at the Boonchuy house, Sprig and Tint enter Anne's room and dump their costumes in the trash. They tried sneaking in, but Anne and Darrel were waiting for them. Darrel turned on the light on them, and Anne spoke. "I don't believe you two! You put all of us at risk just to play dress up?!"

"Yep," replied Sprig. "But that's all done now. It ended up doing more harm than good anyway." Anne starts to feel bad for the two, Darrel included. "Looks like you had it rough," said Darrel. "However, those costumes were pretty cool."

"You like them?" Sprig asked. "I cut up Anne's clothes to make them." That statement left the three stunned. "SPRIG!" they shouted.

Back at the Loyalitat house, Cronaxx was floating around Darrel's room and finds the Eternal Staff. He grew weary seeing the staff fading from its color. 'I wonder if Darrel's ever noticed,' he thought.

Darrel and Tint return from Annes house finding Cronaxx and the staff. "Darrel, your magic is fading," he said. "What?" Darrel asked. He takes the staff and sees the color almost all faded. "But how?" he asked. "It's like I said," replied Tint. "Magic comes from our inner emotions."

"I don't understand," said Darrel. "My mom is well, Cronaxx is our guiding spirit. How can I still not do magic, even when I'm happy?"

"There must be something in your mind that you're not dealing with," said Cronaxx.

Suddenly, a sharp pain hits Darrel in the head and causes him to fall on the floor. "Darrel!" Tint cried. Darrel regains his composure and rests his head on his hand. "What happened?" Tint asked. "I don't know," said Darrel. "But I need to sleep." Tint and Cronaxx nod and Darrel crawls into bed.

While he was asleep, Darrel began tossing and turning slowly, then violently. He started having a nightmare, but for some reason it didn't feel like a nightmare. Darrel saw the world of Amphibia, a once beautiful thriving land. Now a wasteland of industrial pollution.

Factories have been working overtime since Andrias activated his flying castle. And more factories have been made since then. Smoke has replaced the clouds, causing the weather system to go haywire. The wildlife of Amphibia have been exterminated by robots, or moved out of their homes to make way for Andrias' goal.

Then he finds his vision going into a dark room in the castle. The same room where he felt the dark presence. It became much stronger when it woke up. His vision gets blurry for some reason, but his hearing was a little clearer. He could hear Lady Olivia and General Yunan's voices.

"We did it!" cried General Yunan. "I'm not normally one for teamwork. But, uh, good job. Nice hustle," The vision becomes clearer when three figures become more focused. It was Olivia, Yunan, and an armored Marcy. Darrel stopped tossing when he saw her. He realized she was still alive, Anne was right.

He watches as Olivia and Yunan get her out of the room, only for Andrias to push them back in. "Leaving so soon?" Andrias asked. "But we have so much to discuss!" "But how?" Olivia asked. "We've been watching you the whole time," replied Andrias.

Then his crown reveals an eye shining on the trio. Then a metallic monster comes crawling down from the ceiling. It screeches and grabs Marcy, strapping her into a chair. Marcy tries to break free, but to no avail.

"Behold," said Andrias. "Our ultimate creation: A collection of Amphibia's greatest minds preserved for all eternity. Studying the Mossman improved our medical technology. But it wasn't until we met the swordfish that we truly learn to conquer death. And thus, The Core was born!"

"The Core?" Darrel's voice asked. "Let me go!" Marcy cried. "I wish I could," said Andrias. "But my lord craves a host. And it wanted the best, the smartest, the only one who could beat me at Flipwart." Darrel and Marcy gasped. "No," said Darrel's voice. "Don't do this! She's just a kid!" "Honestly, Marcy I like you. Always have," said Andrias. "I begged The Core to consider an alternative host, but without Cronaxx... alas."

Darrel couldn't believe what he was hearing and witnessing. A helmet lowers below Marcy and she cries in fear. Olivia and Yunan could only watch in horror. And Andrias looked away in shame. The helmet stops on Marcy's head, causing her to grunt and scream. Darrel tossed and turned violently again, and this time he sweated and cried.

Marcy's struggling stopped, and The Core's eyes disappeared behind her. Darrel had a bad feeling about what just happened to his friend. And he didn't want to know more.

"The time has finally come for the Core to lead us to our destiny," said Andrias. "But what destiny you ask? Well I suppose I should let *it* speak for itself."

Darrel couldn't believe his eyes. Marcy's body started twitching back up straight, making a few snapping noises. Darrel cringed at the sounds and tried to look away. But he couldn't. The Core opened its ten eyes and grinned. "Why Hello There."

"NO!" Darrel jumps up, awake from his nightmare. He pants heavily on what he just witnessed. He watched as his best friend, his dungeon buddy, got possessed by an unnatural entity. Or in this case, entities. And he knew that it all wasn't a dream, it all just happened.

Darrel sobbed his heart out. But he was still quiet enough to make sure no one else heard his sorrow. He buried his face in his blanket, and let out his grief for his friend. At the same time, the Eternal Staff faded their colors, till there was nothing but gray. "I've lost her," whimpered Darrel. "We lost her..."

Entering Stardom

Chapter 57 - Entering Stardom

The very next morning, Tint woke up feeling refurbished and ready for another day. Cronaxx appeared out of thin air, even as a ghost he needed to sleep in order to remain focused on what the day lay ahead of them. Darrel however, remained motionless. He was wide awake, yet at the same time, he was tired. His eyes were bagged from the night.

"Woah, Darrel, what happened?" Tint asked. "Did you not get enough sleep?" Darrel looks up without saying a word, then looks back down. Tint looks to the staff to see all its color vanished. "Uncle, look."

Cronaxx looks with pure sadness. "The magic is gone," he said. "What does that mean?" Tint asked. "It means that whatever kept Darrel up last night, made him so scared and upset that he lost faith in the magic," replied Cronaxx.

Darrel silently nodded. "Darrel," said Tint. "If it's not too much trouble. Can you tell me your nightmare from last night?" Darrel was hesitant to speak. He had been crying all night, that he couldn't produce anymore tears. But he knew Tint wouldn't stop without an answer.

"I saw a vision," he said silently. "But if I'm gonna go into detail, promise me that you won't say anything? No one can know." Tint and Cronaxx knew it was this serious. They knew it was dark, but they didn't want to keep this away from everyone. "On one condition," said Cronaxx. "You have to promise to tell the people you trust yourself."

"Okay," said Darrel. "It all started when I saw Amphibia. It was not the same when we left it. There were factories producing robots,

smoke replacing the clouds in the sky, red crimson skies overlooked the horizon. Amphibia has become a wasteland of destruction and despair."

Tint and Cronaxx sighed in sadness. "It gets worse," said Darrel. "Andrias has a master. I saw it with my own eyes." "What was it?" Tint asked. "It was a machine called The Core," replied Darrel. "It consists of the minds of all the smartest beings in Amphibia's history." "Artificial intelligence," said Cronaxx. "Preserving one's life after death is a terrible thing to do."

"How so Uncle?" Tint asked. "It's the natural order of things when creatures like us live to the end of our days," said Cronaxx. "But to preserve your mind, your soul, your personality, it's more damaging than you realize."

"And now, The Core has chosen a host," said Darrel. "Who did it choose?" Tint asked. "At first Andrias was going to use Cronaxx," said Darrel. "But he didn't," said Cronaxx. "Because after I fell, my body faded until there was nothing."

"So The Core chose someone else," said Darrel. "And not just anyone." He tightens the grip on his blanket, having trouble trying to get his words out. Every word to the truth is like a dagger to his heart. "It chose... not just anyone. But... one who is the best... The smartest... a-and..."

Darrel choked up, knowing it was the moment of truth. "The only one... who could beat Andrias at Flipwart." Tint and Cronaxx were a little surprised. "Are you saying," said Tint. "That Andrias gave the Core..?"

Darrel nodded, "He gave The Core to Marcy. She's alive, Anne was right." Tint and Cronaxx gasped. "But how?" Tint asked. "You were right, no one could've survived an impale like that." "He must have placed her in preserved care to prevent her from fading," said Cronaxx.

Darrel nodded again, "Lady Olivia and General Yunan removed her from some kind of rejuvenation tank. That's what kept her alive all this time. But now, the core has taken control of her. I heard her screaming, I felt her pain. It was like a thousand shards of glass piercing into your skull. And then it all went black."

Tint and Cronaxx were most upset to see Darrel like this. So much pain, so much horror, so much burden. And on a thirteen year old teenager nonetheless. "I'm so sorry Darrel," said Tint. He jumps up to hug his best friend.

Just then, Jane and Amelia come in to tell Darrel breakfast is ready. They find their brother tired and depressed, so they immediately come to his aid. He calls his parents and he tells them what happened to him last night.

The Loyaltats were most shocked to hear that Marcy was alive, but horrified that she was being brainwashed by the Core. "This is terrible," said Sarah. "Is there anything we can do?" "I don't think there is," replied Matthew. "All we can do now is comfort our son. He needs us now more than ever." Darrel nods, "That's all I want right now. And if it's not too much trouble, can we not tell Anne about this? It'll break her heart." The family agrees without a second thought.

"Well, we're going to have breakfast," said Amelia. "You come down when you're ready to eat." Darrel smiles sadly as his family, Tint, and Cronaxx head downstairs. His phone chimes reveal Anne texting him about taking the Plantars on a tour. 'Taking the Plantars to tour Hollywood. Wanna join?' Not wanting to bring their morale down, Darrel rejects the offer. 'I can't, I'm spending time with my family.'

Anne gets his response, and decides to take the Plantars to Hollywood anyway. Anne and the Plantars take the tour bus to see the sights of Hollywood. Polly, and Sprig were amazed, Hop pop was speechless. "Welcome to Hollywood," said Anne.

"Impressive, right HP?" Hop pop was happy beyond words, considering his dream was to be an actor. "Why, it's like your world

actually respects actors," said Hop pop. "Respect them?" Anne asked. "Hah! Around here, people worship actors, AS GODS!"

"If only that were me," said Hop pop. He gazes across to see an actor be glamored by fans. Despite not achieving his goal long ago, Hop pop still wonders what could've been. "I know my acting career didn't pan out. But maybe I'd have a shot in this world!"

"Possibly," said Anne. "But, Mr X is after us, and he's seen you. So we need to keep a low profile. However, while Anne wasn't looking, Hop pop made his way into the street. "Hollywood, here I come!" he shouted. Anne wanted to go after him, however she didn't feel like it. "You know what, I do not have the energy for this," she said.

He raced down the street seeing opportunities he could never imagine. Along the way, he photo bombed someone's shot, and jumped onto a street dancer. He couldn't find any reason to frown at the place where his dream could come true. And it's only one audition away.

As he continues to rush down the street, he accidentally bumps into an elderly short man. "Oh I am so sorry," said Hop pop. "Ah, don't worry about it," said the old man. "Happens a lot at these old foggy auditions."

"WHA?" Hop pop gasped. He was standing in a line of people waiting for a time to shine on camera. "Auditions? Are you all actors?" "Guilty as charged," replied the old man. "Still waiting for my big break though."

He offers Hop pop his hand, "Humphrey Westwood, nice to meet ya. You an actor too?" "It's only my singular passion," replied Hop pop. "Hopediah Plantar."

"Say, I thought I knew the senior male actors around here," said Humphrey. "You from out of town?" "Yep," said Hop pop. Hop pop couldn't give away where he was from, so he left out the details. "Way out of town."

Then, the agent comes out of the door asking for Humphrey Westwood. Only to mistake Hop pop for Humphrey instead. The two apparently look alike to the agent, thanks to Hop pop's disguise. Then, Humphrey comes up with a suggestion.

"Hopediah, you should audition," he said. "Go ahead, take my spot in line." Hop pop was happy to have a chance to shine, but he just couldn't take Humphrey's place. But Humphrey considers this a Welcome to Hollywood to a new friend.

Hop pop enters the audition studio, and stands in front of the green screen. A spotlight shines on Hop pop, a script was handed to him by the agent. "Alright," said the scout. "They'll set the scene for you. You got this elbow cream, you put it on, you feel brand new. You're so surprised, you say..."

Hop pop stood in silence, he dropped his script and said. "Oooh, wow! Great!" But then the lights turned back on and the spotlight was turned off. The scout wasn't impressed, "Nope, not feeling it. Shame too, because everything about you is literally perfect."

"SAY WHAT!?" Hop pop gasped. His gasp echoed in the studio, shocking and gasping the staff. The scout was back to being impressed, "That is the most beautiful thing I have ever heard! Everyone, we got a new catchphrase." The staff applauded at his role, and Hop pop was happy to have his dream come true.

Outside the studio across the street, Anne, Sprig, and Polly were looking for souvenirs in the gift shop. Sprig was trying on shades with slats across, making it hard for him to see. "Yep, can't see a thing." Polly was trying on a chained watch and street clothes. "Hollywood? More like Pollywood!"

Anne sends Darrel another text message, hoping for another reply. The phone shows that he looks like he's texting, but then disappears. 'I hope Darrel's okay,' she thought. She looks across the street and sees Humphrey, mistaking him for Hop pop. "There's Hop pop. And it looks like he didn't cause any trouble."

They go over to see him, only for Humphrey to turn around and meet them. "Oh sorry," said Anne. "You look just like someone I know." Then, Hop pop with a gleeful smile and the agent exits the studio. "Alright, this guy got the part," said the agent. "Everyone else can go home."

Anne was stunned while Sprig and Polly were excited for their grandfather. "Are you kidding?!" "Way to go HP!" Humphrey was happy for his new friend, he offered a handshake. "Congratulations, Hopediah!"

Suddenly, Hop pop snapped back to reality, realizing what he had just done. He took Humphrey's spot, when he could've had that chance. "Humphrey, wait, I took your spot. I may have taken your opportunity." Humphrey just shrugged it off, "Pish posh, it was one in a mil either way. I'm just happy it went to a nice guy. Plus I waited forty five years for a break, what's a few more?"

Hop pop sulked, knowing the same feeling he went through just like Humphrey. "I still don't think this is a good idea," said Anne. "But as long as it's for something small that no one sees. Maybe it'll be harmless."

"So Anne," said Sprig. "Has Darrel gotten back yet?" "Nope," said Anne. "I've tried texting him for a while, but he hasn't responded. Do you think he's okay?" "Probably Anne," said Polly. "Or maybe he's just sick and he's getting delusional." Anne nodded sadly and looked up. 'Please be okay, Darrel.'

The very next day, Darrel got up for breakfast feeling more down than usual. He couldn't bring himself to talk with anyone else, aside from his family. Ever since he lost his magical abilities, he sulked on the couch eating cereal. He turns on the television and finds himself watching the commercial break.

"Do your elbows crack when you bend them?" asked a familiar voice. Darrel spat his breakfast on the television and got a good look. "HOP POP!?" he exclaimed. "What's going on?" Tint asked.

"Hop pop is starring in a commercial!" said Darrel. "Hop pop's in a commercial?" Amelia asked.

The rest of the family rushed in to watch. "Try crack-a-lackin' elbow cream," said the announcer. "But wait there's more." "Say what!?" "This is not good," said Darrel. "How's that not good?" Jane asked. "Hop pop's famous."

"That's the problem," said Darrel. "We were supposed to be keeping a low profile! What was Hop pop thinking?!" Darrel groaned, "I wouldn't be surprised if the Boonchuy's were watching this right now. Or worse: Mr X." "Does a federal agent have time for TV?" Amelia asked.

Amelia wasn't wrong. Somewhere in the city of Los Angeles, Mr X was feeding his new frog pets he found in the movie theater. "Just because I'm a federal employee doesn't mean I can't enjoy the odd episode of Judge Julee," he said.

During commercial break, he spots Hop pop's commercial and immediately screenshots his face. He takes the image, uploads it to the computer and gets the location of where the commercial was aired. "And they said I was a fool to not pay for ad free streaming," he said.

Matthew was driving his family through Hollywood, hoping to catch the Boonchuys. "So where are we going?" Jane asked. "To the studio where the commercial is airing," said Darrel. "If we're lucky, Anne and the Plantars are going there too." "Uhh, Darrel," said Cronaxx. He points to the billboard with Hop pop's face on it and a voice bubble that says, 'Say WHAT?!'

It seems that everywhere they go, they can see advertisements of Hop pop's commercial break. "And it only took one audition," said Tint. "We gotta find them, fast," said Amelia. "Good idea," said Darrel. "Me and Tint will search for them on foot while you guys drive around outside the city. Work your way in until you find them."

Darrel, Tint, and Cronaxx get out of the car and the family drives off. "So where do we start?" Tint asked. "It's easy," said Darrel. "Follow the crowd. We find the biggest crowd gathering, we'll find him." "Of course," said Cronaxx. "Follow the bees, and you'll find the queen." "Why bees Uncle?" said Tint. "Why couldn't it be 'follow the butterflies?'" "Do butterflies have a queen?" Cronaxx asked with a grin. Tint sulked and said, "No."

The three follow the crowd and find Hop pop on the phone. But they weren't the only ones following the crowd. Mr X was right behind them with a mischievous grin.

"Meet you at ten am?" Hop pop asked. "At your office in the studio water tower? Just show up and I get the part!?" Anne snatches her phone back and sees that Hop pop only has fifteen minutes to get to the studio. Darrel pushes his way through the crowd getting to his friends.

"Anne!" Darrel cried. "Darrel," smiled Anne. "What are you doing here?" "We need to get out of here," said Darrel. "Let's take the Plantars and get mov- And Hop pop's on the run." He points to Hop pop running to the studio. "I'm sorry kids, this is too big to pass on!" Hop pop shouted as he ran off.

"NO!" Anne cried. "HOP POP!" Darrel shouted. "You don't understand!" "Hey! Don't push man!" The two teens turn to find Mr X approaching them. "Hide!" The group takes cover behind a trash can, and Mr X passes them. Turns out, he's following the wandering minnow from the school of fish.

"Jenny," called Mr X. "He's headed for the studio lot. Meet me with reinforcements, we got him for real this time." The group hears him call the order and wait for him to pass. "We've got to get to Hop pop before Mr X does," said Anne. "Follow me," said Darrel. "I know a shortcut."

At the studio, Hop pop gets access from security to head to the studio. Mr X tries to get to Hop pop by using his grappling hook to

climb over the wall to get past security. Anne, Darrel, and the Amphibians couldn't reach him in time, even with Darrel's shortcut.

Then, a golf cart pulls up to the toll booth, giving Anne and Darrel another idea. As the guy presents his pass to security, the gate opens, and the group sneak on the cart without him noticing.

Hop pop proceeds to the studio, but lets two guys carrying a mirror pass by. But in the mirror, Hop pop spots Mr X following him. Hop pop gives chase and takes a golf cart, but Mr X takes another cart and follows him.

"Oh no, Hop pop," said Anne as the group popped out of their hiding place. The driver suddenly takes notice. "Ahh! Who the heck are you people?" Polly jumps at him, grabbing his shirt. "No questions, Earth man!" Polly kicks him out of the cart, and Darrel takes the wheel. "Hold on!"

It's a chase across the studio, with Hop pop heading to the water tower, Mr X chasing behind him, and the others falling behind. They drive through shootings on movie sets, pass tv shows airing live, even meet performers with different accents when they're not shooting.

Hop pop swerves to another turn leading to the water tower. Tint notices a palm tree nearby, and uses his magic to block Mr X. The tree falls just in time and Mr X dodges the impact. He takes the cart and looks for another way to the water tower.

Hop pop makes it to the entrance of the tower. His dream pursuits are only a hop, skip, and a jump away. Feeling so excited, he didn't see a small janitor in his way. Hop pop bumps into him by accident. "Oh, I'm so sorry," he said. "I didn't see you there."

The janitor turns to reveal a familiar face. "Humphrey?" Hop pop asked. "Looks like you found out about my day job, Hopediah," said Humphrey sweeping. "Where are you off to?" "Oh me?" Hop pop

asked. "I uh, have an audition up there." He points to the water tower, making Humphrey smile.

"With Mitch? Bravo, my friend, bravo! Golly what a break. I'm so happy for you. Even if I never make it, it's enough to know an old fart like me did." That statement really made Hop pop so upset. If he didn't take Humphrey's spot, then maybe Humphrey would've gotten the chance he'd hoped for. Hop pop decided then and there to return the gesture of kindness to a good friend. He offers Humphrey his spot on the audition of a lifetime.

Inside the water tower, Mr X interrupts the meeting with the director giving Mr Plantar the part in the movie. "There he is, get him!" The orders the feds to apprehend Hop pop.

The kids arrive to see the fight from below the tower, only to find Hop pop behind them. "Thank goodness you're okay," said Tint. "Who did they catch?" Darrel asked. "Just an old fart that almost looks like me," said Hop pop.

The feds apprehend the old man mistaken for Hop pop. Mr X laughs triumphantly, "Thought you could escape me, huh?" The old man reveals himself to be Humphrey Westwood. Mr X tried to take his nose off, hoping it was part of his disguise. But...

"Ow! Let go of my nose!" Humphrey shouted. Mr X was stunned, he was duped again. And if that wasn't bad enough, the director was furious at him. "I don't believe this! You dare treat Hollywood's newest star this way?! You'll be hearing from my robust team of lawyers after this!" The feds let go of Humphrey and leave Mr X, defeated once again.

Back outside the tower, the group comes out from hiding in the bushes. "So you gave the part to someone else?" Darrel asked. Hop pop nodded, "He's waited as long as I have. But not anymore." The two elderly gentlemen wave goodbye.

"I've already had a taste of the spotlight kids," said Hop pop. "And it's time for this old frog to stop pining over what he doesn't have. And start protecting the things he does." He gestures to his family, Darrel, Anne, and the Salamanders, and the group hugs it out.

"Come on guys, let's go home," said Darrel as he climbed into the cart. "You know," said Hop pop. "This whole experience has taught me that the real power is behind the camera." "You don't say," said Tint. "Kind of like wielding a magic wand or staff?" "Exactly," said Cronaxx.

"So Darrel," said Anne. "Is everything going okay at home? You hardly ever return my calls or texts." Darrel suddenly perked up and tried to keep a positive face. "Oh yeah, everything's fine Anne. I've just been spending more time with my family. After all, it's been months and we still have a lot of catching up to do."

Anne and the Plantars were concerned with Darrel's behavior, they knew something was off with him. "Is everything okay with him?" Polly asked Tint. "He's been through a lot," replied Tint. "It's best if he tells you when he's ready." The group leave the studio lot and park the cart outside the gates. The Loyaltats arrive to take them all home.

Forgiveness Lies Within

Chapter 58 - Forgiveness Lies Within

After escaping Mr X and making a fool of him again, our heroes go back into hiding. Anne and the Plantars were relieved to be home. Tint was relieved as well, so was his ghostly uncle. The two families were tuckered out and all went to sleep. Everyone that is, except for Darrel.

Darrel just laid in bed with his eyes open. Knowing that if he went back to sleep now, he would see that monster that's taken over Marcy again. But at the same time, he needed to sleep. So he shuts his eyes, and begins to dream.

But the dream happened to be another nightmare. This time, he was falling from great heights, with no end in sight. He saw the ground that showed five glowing lights, but the image was very blurry. Then glowing eyes came flying around him. They spin around the scared teen, until a familiar entity appears in front of him: The Core.

"You can't escape this!" said the Core. "You are nothing without your friends. You are nothing without your magic. You are nothing no matter what you do!" Darrel shut his eyes and tried to escape, but Andiras' grip tightened around him. "Look at what you've done," he said.

Darrel slowly opens his eyes to see a new person being possessed by the Core. It was something more terrifying than Marcy. It was himself, and he was far more vicious. The Eternal Staff's crystal was hovering over his antennas, acting like a power source or a powerful eye. Powerful meteors came from the dark clouds above, hitting the grounds of Amphibia and Los Angeles. His darker self smiled, "This is on you."

Andiras' second hand slams down on the two Darrels, and Darrel wakes up sweating and panting. Darrel regains his breath and slams his head with his eyes open. 'It's over,' he thought. 'And it's all my fault. If I hadn't yelled at Marcy... She didn't want to be alone. And I just pushed her away.'

The next morning, Tint wakes up to the sound of a very sad guitar. This brought Tint's smile down to a frown. He finds Darrel strumming his guitar with a sad melody. "Hey Darrel," he said. "Another nightmare?" Darrel nodded quietly in response.

"Wanna talk about it?" Tint asked. Darrel kept his mouth shut. He never made a sound. Tint grew weary about his best friend. He's never felt this depressed before. "He hasn't gotten any sleep I presume?" Cronaxx asked. "I've never seen him like this before," replied Tint.

Cronaxx looked at the troubled teen. Then remembered all the talk about his previous nightmares. "It would seem that Marcy's predicament has placed a heavy burden on his shoulders," said Cronaxx. "But it wasn't his fault," said Tint.

The day progressed slowly for the trio. Darrel sat at the table eating a bowl of cereal, not caring that it wasn't his favorite brand. His family took notice and wanted to say something, but the Salamanders gestured 'no' in response.

Darrel stayed outside in the backyard listening for the birds chirping in the trees. He watched them as they landed on the branches, then after a small stretch or clean, they flew off. This made Darrel smile sadly for a bit until he frowned again.

Then, his phone goes off. It was Anne texting him. 'Darrel, Great news. Dr Jan has a lead on getting back to Amphibia. Head to Dr Frakes' Brainasium as soon as you can.' Darrel trembles at the response of going to Amphibia. He puts his phone away and looks down on the ground.

He pulls out the picture of him, Anne, Marcy, and Sasha having a fun time together. He looks away and shoves the photo in his pocket, crumbling it up. He decides to go for a walk.

(Rascal Flatts - What hurts the Most)

(Darrel walks out of his house and journeys down the street)

Darrel:

I can take the rain on the roof of this empty house

That don't bother me

I can take a few tears now and then, and just let 'em out

I'm not afraid to cry every once in a while even though

Going on with you gone still upsets me

There are days every now and again

I pretend I'm okay

But that's not what gets me

What hurts the most

Was being so close

And having so much to say

And watching you walk away

And never knowing

What could've been

And not seeing that love in you

Is what I was trying to do

(Darrel looks over to see Saint James Middle School and has a flashback of him, Anne, Marcy, and Sasha on their first day. "Are you ready, Darrel?" Sasha asked. "As long as I have you guys, nothing can stop us," replied Darrel. "That's the spirit, Darrel," said Marcy. "Now let's-" Marcy accidentally walks into the flagpole, making Darrel, Anne, and Sasha laugh. Darrel smiles and continues to walk.)

It's hard to deal with the pain of losing you everywhere I go

But I'm doing it

It's hard to force that smile when I see our old friends

And I'm alone

Still harder getting up, getting dressed, living with this regret

But I know if I could do it over

I would trade, give away all the words that I saved in my heart

That I left unspoken

What hurts the most

Is being so close

And having so much to say (much to say)

And watching you walk away

And never knowing

What could've been

And not seeing that love in you

Is what I was trying to do

(Darrel looks over to the library and thinks back to the day he and Marcy were reading assigned books for the summer, "So how about 'The Templar knights?'" Darrel asked. "It sounds medieval and it's nonfictional enough." "Sure," said Marcy. "And maybe we could read more Cynthia Coven afterwards." "You know I'm a sucker for magic," said Darrel. The two laugh and the echoes bring Darrel back to reality. Darrel looks down and walks away.)

Oh

Hey, yeah

What hurts the most

Was being so close

And having so much to say (much to say)

And watching you walk away

And never knowing

What could've been

And not seeing that love in you

Is what I was trying to do

Not seeing that love in you

That's what I was trying to do

Ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh

Darrel's walk ends at the park. The same park where everything started. Where they stole the box, opened it, and woke up in

Amphibia. Darrel sat on one of the benches, trying to practice his magic. No luck, not even with his staff close by.

Tint and Cronaxx approached him with disbelief. "So are you going to sit there feeling sorry for yourself?" Tint asked. "Tint," said Darrel. "This is where it all started. Where we first met, where we stole the box, where we first came to Amphibia. I didn't know what was happening. Now I lost Marcy, I lost my powers, I've lost hope. What's the point in fighting?"

Cronaxx was disappointed, "This is why the magic left." Darrel snapped back to his mentors. "Left?" he asked. "You didn't lose your powers," said Tint. "Your powers left you." Darrel turned away, "Great, another reason I don't deserve magic."

Having enough, Tint smacked his best friend in the face. "That's enough!" He takes off his disguise, not caring if he gets caught. But lucky for him, no one was around.

"Darrel, you have to buck up!" Tint said. "This isn't you. You can't give up when things get rough. That's not how a wizard acts." "How can I be a wizard without magic?" Darrel asked. "It's impossible."

"A wizard knows no such word," said Tint. "He's right," said Cronaxx. "You've let your anger, guilt, and sadness take over your mind, you've forgotten the basic principles of being a wizard."

"And that's why I'm going to help you," said Tint. "You are?" Darrel asked. "Yes," replied Tint. "What happened to your friend is not the end. This is just the beginning. That's why we need to be ready to fight back." Darrel's phone goes off and Anne has texted him again. 'Come quick! We got a lead!'

Darrel gazed at the message, then turned off his phone. He looks at himself from the reflection of his phone and comes to realize something. He is not ready for what comes next. He has to return to Amphibia, but at the same time he knows what's coming and he's not mentally well.

He looks to Tint and Cronaxx, then to his hands. "You have the will to do this," said Tint. "But you are in control of your own destiny. Not me, not Sasha, not Anne, not Cronaxx, not Marcy, you. Whatever you decide, is up to you." Darrel grips his hands and takes a deep breath. "Let's get my magic back.

The two salamanders smiled and the three returned home to the backyard. "Here should do just fine," said Tint. "So what am I doing, Teacher?" Darrel asked as he sat down. "You're going to meditate until you confront the negative emotions," said Tint. Darrel crossed his legs and breathed, "I don't know how long this will take," said Darrel. "It may take hours or days," replied Cronaxx. "Depending on how powerful your block is."

Darrel nodded, "Before I go, I want to say thank you to you two. For not giving up on me." Tint smiled, "Your welcome, Darrel. Now it's time for instruction. Begin meditation."

Darrel closed his eyes and slowly began to concentrate on his meditation. Cronaxx kept his family away from the backyard telling them not to disturb his training. His vision slowly started glowing inside his eyelids. He could see cosmic stars slowly floating around him. Then, they started turning so fast they looked like a laser light show.

Darrel opens his eyes to find himself in a field of open hilltops. The grass was so long, he could see the wind blow. He didn't know where to start, until he saw a white dragonfly and butterfly. He follows the two and then glowing orbs start appearing out of thin air.

Darrel approaches one very closely and starts to hear children laughing. The orb reveals a young Darrel reading the Wizard, the Knight, and the Dragon. Darrel smiles, knowing this is the memory of when he first met Anne and Marcy. He touches the orb and then takes form into a butterfly.

(Here Comes a Thought - Estelle)

Every orb Darrel passed becomes a memory of his journey in Amphibia. From the day he first met Tint, to raising Clipper, to finding Anne, Sasha, and Marcy.

Take a moment to think of just

Flexibility, love, and trust

Take a moment to think of just

Flexibility, love, and trust

Here comes a thought

That might alarm you

What someone said

And how it harmed you

Something you did

That failed to be charming

Things that you said are

Suddenly swarming

And oh, you're losing sight, you're losing touch

All these little things seem to matter so much

That they confuse you

That I might lose you

Take a moment, remind yourself to

Take a moment and find yourself

Take a moment to ask yourself if

This is how we fall apart

But it's not, but it's not, but it's not, but it's not, but it's not

It's okay, it's okay, it's okay, it's okay, it's okay

You've got nothing, got nothing, got nothing, got nothing to fear

I'm here, I'm here, I'm here

As Darrel continues through the field of memories, he feels a sudden jolt from his arm. The jolt shot straight up from his arm to his brain, then a chest appeared in front of him. It had a mysterious lock that had two keyholes.

"That's strange," he said. "Where are the keys?" He looks to his hand and finds one of the keys in his hand. "Huh, that explains half my question." He turns around to find the other key, only to find a curled up human in dark clothing.

"Excuse me," said Darrel. "Do you know where a key can be found?" He slowly approaches the human, only to flinch away from Darrel. "No," the figure said in a raspy voice. "We're not giving up the precious!"

Darrel is shocked to see the figure is a past version of himself. Eyes glowing red, and wearing his old wizard outfit. "You're me," said Darrel. "And I'm you," said Dark Darrel.

Dark Darrel takes his staff and commands a herd of butterflies. "I'm the part of you that you've cast aside!" The butterflies hit Darrel showing him the bad memories of his life.

Here comes a thought

That might alarm me

What someone said

And how it harmed me

Something I did

That failed to be charming

Things that I said are

Suddenly swarming

And oh, I'm losing sight, I'm losing touch

All these little things seem to matter so much

That they confuse me

That I might lose me

"We should be angry," said Dark Darrel. "No matter what they say, they hurt us. Sasha, Marcy, all the others. Yet here you are trying to keep a straight face. Don't you think it's time to end this charade?"

Darrel stands defiant, "This is no charade, I can overcome this."
"NO!" Dark Darrel shouted. "How much longer can you keep this up? You have no friends in Amphibia! They betrayed you, why go back to them?!"

Looking back at the memories of escaping Andrias' might, Dark Darrel grows more vicious and dark. "And what about Marcy?! She took you away from the people you love! You can't get her back, even if you had all the power in the world. She won't be the same!"

Darrel crouches down at the image of her being possessed by the Core and grips his heart. Then, he reaches into his pocket and finds the old photo of him, Anne, Sasha, and Marcy. He takes a deep breath and looks up at his dark self.

"I know you hate them for using me, I'm upset about that as well. But I hate the fact that they act this way. Growing up can be scary, because you might not like how your friends change. But now Sasha and Marcy are scared. Because they're stuck and they don't know what to do!"

Dark Darrel covers his ears and screams in agony, knowing he's right. But he didn't want to let go of his wrath. "And I owe you an apology. I didn't want to express my emotions at them because I didn't want to lose my friends. But I ended up losing them anyway. I was as scared at losing the close friends I have, I was willing to do anything to keep us together. But those mistakes only made me more angry at myself. I just didn't want to be... alone."

Dark Darrel calms down a bit and reduces his size back to normal. "Just like Marcy," he said. "Yeah," said Darrel. "She was scared that she didn't want to lose us, she was willing to do anything to keep us together. But it's because of her, I grew up into a man. I gained magical abilities, and I'm being taught by the greatest wizards of all of Amphibia. I stood up to Sasha when she was controlling me and the others. Anne and I found love in each other. And because of Marcy, my mom has a second chance at life."

"Yeah," said Dark Darrel. "But why am I here?" "Because we must forgive each other," replied Darrel. "Because there is a bigger threat than us, and Andrias. Our family has forgiven us, our friends have forgiven us, now it's time we forgive ourselves. And work together to get them back."

Take a moment, remind yourself to

Take a moment and find yourself

Take a moment and ask yourself if

This is how we fall apart

But it's not, but it's not, but it's not, but it's not, but it's not

It's okay, it's okay, it's okay, it's okay, it's okay

I've got nothing, got nothing, got nothing, got nothing to fear

I'm here, I'm here, I'm here

And it was just a thought, just a thought, just a thought, just a thought, just a thought

It's okay, it's okay, it's okay, it's okay, it's okay

We can watch, we can watch, we can watch, we can watch them go by

From here, from here, from here

Take a moment to think of just

Flexibility, love, and trust

Take a moment to think of just

Flexibility, love, and trust

Darrel offered his hand to Dark Darrel and they smiled. Dark Darrel accepted his hand and the two keys became one. And so did the lock, Darrel's dark form merged with him and he unlocked the chest. Inside the chest was the magic of the Eternal Staff.

Darrel grabs the staff and the magic flows within him again, and brighter than ever. Darrel smiles within himself, then looks at his past selves. His younger self, his pre-Amphibia self, his Amphibia self, and his wizard Amphibia self. They all smile, agreeing that it's time to return home. "I'm here," he whispered.

Darrel opens his eyes to find himself back in his backyard. Standing up, with his staff in hand, he looks up to see the staff's colors fully restored. He looks down to see Tint and Cronaxx smiling. "Well done, student," said Tint.

"Mom! Dad! Girls, come out here!" Darrel cried. The Loyallat family races outside to see Darrel with his staff in hand. "Darrel what is it?" Matthew asked. Darrel waves his hand and summons a small rain cloud over his head. Rain falls from the cloud, exciting Amelia and Jane. "You have your magic back!" Amelia said.

Darrel nods with glee and turns his sisters into their favorite animals for a short period of time. Matthew and Sarah laugh as soon as they return to normal. Cronaxx smiled at Tint and said, "Congratulations Tint. You two are one step away from becoming wizards." Unaware of what the last step is, Tint smiled at his progress. "Well I had a great teacher."

Then all of a sudden, Darrel's phone goes off again. He sees that Anne has been trying to get to him all day. From voicemails, to text messages, Anne was very worried about him. Darrel took a breather and texted Anne. 'Come to the park, we need to talk.'

Darrel waited in the park on the same bench where he was sulking. Anne arrived with a scared look on her face. The amount of time Darrel didn't respond made her worried. But Darrel waved to her smiling, making her feel a bit relieved.

Anne sat down, "Hey Darrel. What happened? I was worried you didn't respond." Darrel smiled, "I have been focusing on this." He casts a nebula spell and cups a small ball in his hand. Anne was happy to see that he got his powers back and is keeping it to a minimum to avoid crowds.

"Well I've got good news too," said Anne. "A scientist named Terri is going to help us possibly create a portal to Amphibia." Darrel smiled, "That is good news." "I can't wait to see the look on Andrias' face when we return."

Darrel soon frowns at the idea, "Listen Anne, what I'm going to tell you isn't going to be easy." "What is it, Darrel?" Anne asked. "I had a vision the last few days," replied Darrel. "And that vision showed me

that there is something more dangerous than Andrias. Something we have never faced before."

"What is it?" Anne asked. "It's called the Core," replied Darrel. "The Core consists of the greatest minds in all of Amphibia's history. It's a machine, and it is evil. So evil that it's destroying all life in Amphibia for its plan of world conquest."

Anne was scared, "That's really bad." Darrel frowned more with what he was about to say. "And there's something else. You were right." "About what?" Anne asked. "About Marcy," replied Darrel. "I saw her in my vision. She's alive." Anne perked hearing her friend survived, but kept her smile on hold. Knowing Darrel had more to say. "But I'm afraid that the next time we see her, it won't be her."

"So, what are we going to do?" Anne asked. "We take things one step at a time," replied Darrel. "Once we get to Amphibia, we find Sasha. Then, we gather as many allies as we can. Frogs, Toads, Newts, Salamanders, anyone who wants to stand against the tyrant king."

"It's not going to be easy," said Anne. Darrel offers his hand, "Then let's make another pact." The two stand hand in hand. "I am Darrel Loyalitat!" "And I'm Anne Boonchuy!" "And together, we're going to save our friends. And Stop Andrias and the Core!"

The two proceed to head home, still holding hands. "So are you sure we can stop the Core?" Anne asked. "With our connection to the Calamity Stones," replied Darrel. "Something tells me this is going to be quite a climactic battle." The two smile and walk into the sunset.

O Tannenbaum

Chapter 59 - O Tannenbaum

The most wonderful time of the year has arrived in America. Winter season in mid December. And close to that is Christmas time. People were getting ready for their favorite holiday. Especially the Boonchuys and the Loyalitats. Christmas time is their favorite time of year that both families plan to go out on decorations.

Thanks to Darrel's magical abilities, the Loyalitats were able to decorate the entire house before the fifth day of December. Tint and Cronaxx were so surprised with what's going on, they approached Darrel and his sisters. "Darrel, is this a special occasion?" Cronaxx asked. "Yeah, what's going on?" Tint asked.

Darrel smiled, "It's Christmas." "Christmas?" asked the salamanders. "Oh yeah, I bet they've never heard of Christmas," said Amelia. "Christmas is the time of year where families get together, exchange gifts, songs, fruitcake, and make fond memories."

"And this year is going to be perfect," said Jane. "Because mommy is well enough to help us get ready!" Darrel smiled, "This is the first Christmas in a couple years where she can help without tiring herself from her illness." This made Tint smile too. "I'm proud of you, nephew," said Cronaxx. "Thanks, Uncle."

At the Boonchuy's house, Mrs Boonchuy was also going out on Christmas. She decorated her house, their cat, and her family head to toe with Christmas cheer. The Plantars however, were very confused. "Anne, what's happening?" Hop pop asked. "Are we under attack!?" Sprig panicked. "Are these fortifications? Booby traps? Weapons?"

"Dude, calm down," said Anne. "It's just Christmas." "It's what?" The Plantars asked. Then, Anne realized that the Plantars never heard of

Christmas. "Oh shoot, I never explained this? Christmas is one of the biggest Earth holidays. And us Boonchuys go BIG!"

"Ah, a holiday. Neato," said Sprig. "So what's it about?" Before Anne could respond, the home phone rang. Mrs Boonchuy picked it up, "Happy holidays from the Boonchuys. Yes, this is she." Whoever was over the phone made Mrs Boonchuy very excited.

"Really?!" She gasped, and turned to her family. "It's the Downtown LA Christmas Palooza Parade," she said. "There was a last minute opening!" Anne and her father gasped while the Plantars shrugged.

"It's the annual holiday parade," replied Anne. "Local businesses, schools, and sports teams all make floats. It's always been my mom's dream to have one for the restaurant."

"The heck is a float?" Polly asked. "Every answer brings more and more questions," replied Hop pop. No matter how much they learn about Earth, there's always something new to discover.

"Could this finally be the year?" Mr Boonchuy asked. He and Anne jump in excitement. "Thank you so much, I just can't believe it! But I'm going to have to say no." Mr Boonchuy and Anne were shocked. "What!?"

"Mom, why'd you say no?" Anne asked. "Honey, as much as I would love a Thai Go Float, and I love Christmas more than anything, it would draw way too much attention to us," said Mrs Boonchuy. Anne comes to realize that their presence with the Plantars could grab the people's attention. Especially with the amount of close calls that they had.

"Yeah," said Anne. "But-" "I mean three frogs from another dimension parading in front of all of LA?" Mrs Boonchuy asked. "Even in disguises, it's hard to keep a low profile." "True," said Mr Boonchuy. "Especially not with that evil king coming after you and Darrel."

"Honestly," said Mrs Boonchuy. "We're just happy you're home to spend the holiday with us. That's more than enough for me." Anne would not let that stand. "But this is your dream," she said. "Yeah, well, we can still do all the normal traditions; carols, cookies, decorating the tree, gifts, the family Christmas card."

"Oh that reminds me," said Mr Boonchuy. "I picked the theme for this year's card: Candid. It's gonna be groundbreaking." "What was last year's theme?" Sprig asked. Anne gestures to the photo of the Boonchuys dressed in animal costumes. "Ungulates," she replied.

Sprig was stunned, "What the heck?" "See," said Mrs Boonchuy. "We can still have a great holiday without a float in the parade." "And who knows Anne," said Mr Boonchuy. "Maybe you and Darrel could get caught under the mistletoe." Anne blushed in embarrassment, "Daaaad!"

Mr Boonchuy then takes a photo of the Plantars, taking them by surprise. "I'm going to need to be quick on the draw if I wanna capture us in our- OH MY GOODNESS!" His photo comes back as if it was taken in a halloween attraction. "Okay, next time, no flash," said Mr Boonchuy.

Anne suddenly comes up with an idea and makes her way upstairs to her room. Then, a knock on the door was made. Anne answers it to see Darrel and Tint dressed for the holidays. "Merry Christmas, Boonchuys," they said simultaneously. "Welcome Darrel," said Mrs Boonchuy. "I've got something special for you and Anne."

Anne grabs Darrel's arm and takes him upstairs. "Don't ask," she said. "For the love of Frog, don't ask." "Uhh, okay," said Darrel. The group enters Anne's room. "So Anne, I was thinking-" "Hold that thought, Darrel." said Anne. "I need to make a call."

Anne gets on her phone and calls the palooza parade. "Hi, yes, this is Anne Boonchuy. You just called about a parade float for Thai Go. Well we'd like to change that no to a yes. Great! Thanks! Bye!"

"What's going on?" Darrel asked. "We're going to help my mom," replied Anne. "She's completely devastated and she's trying to hide it." "I did sense a sudden melancholy," said Hop pop. "There was a sense of regret in her aura," said Cronaxx.

"Well, my parents have already made too many sacrifices for me," said Anne. "Well no more. This year, I'm going to give them the greatest present ever: The parade float of their dreams. Are you with me?" The group cheered in acceptance and started going over the plans for making the float.

Meanwhile in Amphibia, King Andrias and his entire armada were flying in the sky. Andrias was pleased that his plans of invasion are going well on schedule. However, he was still bent on the only loose ends that stand between him and his plot: Anne, Darrel, and their friends.

"King Andrias," said Blair the Newt. "The robot army is nearly complete." "Ahead of schedule and under budget," said Bartley the Newt. "Excellent Triple B," said the mischievous king. "But what are you wearing?"

Andrias took notice of the Christmas elf outfits the three newts were wearing. "Pretty cute, right?" "It's late winter, which means it's almost time for the human holiday: Christmas! Marcy told us about it, remember?"

"No," said Andrias blandly. "It's fun," said Blair. "We even got you a Christmas gift. Stay right there." Blair rushes over to give Andrias his gift. Blair struggles to give it to him, considering how heavy the box is. Andrias just watches in excitement and amusement.

Eventually Blair gives him the gift, and Andrias opens it. Revealing it to be a butterfly drone. "Wow! What is it exactly?" "Oh. This is our newest drone soldier prototype, sir. If you sign off, we can start mass producing them tomorrow," said Branson.

Andrias was so excited about his new gift. He even found a nifty controller and virtual reality headset for controlling the drone. He tried to put it on his head, but his crown was blocking the strap. "Pfft, crown." He takes off the crown and turns on the drone. "Let's see what this baby can do."

After a few flips, turns, and flight maneuvers, Andrias pushes a button that activates the drone's weapons systems. "Oooh ho ho, now this I like," he said. "Glad to hear it, sire," said Branson. "It just needs a little testing and it'll be-" However, Andrias points the drone's weapons at the newt, wanting to skip the testing phase. "Good to go," said Branson in a scared tone.

"Testing, eh?" said Andrias. "I just had a grand idea. I can send this drone to Earth, and destroy Anne and Darrel virtually. I never should've sent a robot to do a newt's job."

"But technically," said Blair. "You're still sending a robot to do-" "Shut up, Blair!" said Branson and Bartley, covering his mouth.

"Get ready, Anne and Darrel," said Andrias. "Once I figure out how to control this thing, you're finished!" He equips his virtual headset and prepares to fly his drone. He tests the drones on the Triple B, making them run for their lives. "For such tiny legs, you three sure move fast. Hahahaha!"

Back in Los Angeles, Anne and Darrel biked through the streets, looking for a way to start building the Thai Go float. Along the way a busker was seen playing the guitar. "*I'm sure you feel it coming, there's something on the breeze It might be slightly snowing or 70 degrees Regardless of your hemisphere, the holidays are here And with them come the tiding of this special time of the year*"

"So what's the plan Anne?" Polly asked. "How are we making this boat?" "Float," Anne corrected. "And don't worry, I've got a great idea for this bad boy." She shows the group a large float featuring Thai decorations, along with Christmas decorations as well.

"Looks really impressive Anne," said Tint. "The first thing we'll need is some technical help," said Anne. "Anyone know any tech experts?" Darrel pulls up his phone, "Say no more Anne." "Do I?" said Polly as she draws out her phone too.

The group arrived at the Palm Tree Community College for their technical help. Darrel picks up Jake and Ivan along the way. Then, they enter a robotics classroom where the IT Gals were celebrating the holidays.

Miniature robots were dancing to technical Christmas music, with blinking lights all around the lab. "Thank you guys so much for helping us with this float," said Anne. "No problem," said Ally. "We'd do anything for you guys," said Ivan. "Especially around the holiday season."

"Go grab some eggnog and enjoy the party!" cheered Jess. Anne does that and gets cookies from little robots. Darrel looks from the other end of the room and looks down at a wrapped gift. He smiles with joy, excited to give to Anne for the holiday.

"What's that?" Jake asked. "It's my gift to Anne," replied Darrel. "What is it?" Ivan asked. "If I told you it wouldn't be a special gift," said Darrel. "For what it's worth," said Cronaxx. "I think she'll appreciate it either way."

"Chug! Chug! Chug!" Jess and Ally cheered for their panda bot. Their panda bot chugs Christmas punch, then short circuits and shuts down. "Excuse me," said Sprig. "Could you explain Christmas to us?"

"Ya'll never heard of Christmas?" Ally asked. "Uhh, no," said Hop pop. "It's a holiday," said Ally. "You celebrate, get a tree, decorate." "You make cookies, party hard," said Jess. "Just be careful when tying lights to the tree," said Ally. "If you get the voltage wrong, Pffsh!"

"Oh," said Jess. "Forgot to mention that on Christmas you have to get a gift for the person who means the most to you." "And it better be good," said Ally. "A bad gift can pretty much spoil the whole thing." "This is one of those stressful holidays, isn't it?" Hop pop asked.

With the technical crew signed up for the float, Anne and Darrel prepare to arrive at their next stop. The place to get decorations for their float is the Museum of Natural History. Dr Jan decorated the museum with Christmas and Hanukkah decorations. They find her discussing the origin of the mistletoe to an attendant.

"Dr Jan," greeted Darrel. "Anne, Darrel!" Dr Jan greeted. "You're just in time for a festive lecture, strap in." "Hey Dr Jan," said Anne. "Actually, we're building my parents a parade float. We need all the help we can get. Decorations, props..."

Dr Jan was excited to hear about Anne's plans. She allowed Anne to take mannequins and wintery flora from their dioramas. Anne wasted no breath and went to grab her decorations.

Darrel watched from afar, seeing the Plantars get a lecture on the true meaning of Christmas. "Looking for anything specific?" Tint asked. "Nope," replied Darrel. "I think she's got this decoration thing under control."

Cronaxx turns to look at the diorama of a stable. Where a baby is in the center of a group of people. "Hey Darrel, what's that?" Cronaxx asked. Darrel turned and smiled, "That is the replica of the first Christmas: The Nativity." "Sounds like a great tale to tell," said Cronaxx. "Believe me," said Darrel. "It is, because it reminds us of the true spirit of Christmas."

"We've got what we need," said Anne, carrying numerous mannequins. "Ready for our next stop?" "Ready," said Darrel. "Let's get a move on," said Tint. "Time doesn't stand still for all."

Outside, the Busker plays her guitar as Anne, Darrel, and the others make their way across town. *A bucket of fried chicken, a costume for your dad A demon who will stuff you, in a sack if you've been bad, A reindeer gets promoted, an old man confronts his fear Of karma and mortality, This special time of year.*

Then, Darrel feels a slight buzz in his head. It was like the sensation he felt whenever something bad was about to happen. But thanks to facing his darker self, his senses were much lighter, he could feel the magic trying to tell him something.

He looks up to see a butterfly robot, recklessly flying in the sky. 'Is that another robot?' he thought. 'Maybe I should send it a greeting.' He takes his staff and commands a flock of pigeons to fly directly into it. This causes the drone to dive into a billboard and crash. Darrel chuckled quietly in response. "Man I have got to get better at these controls," said an angry Andrias.

For the next few days, Anne, Darrel, and the amphibians take their decorations to the Thai Temple, where the community helps them construct their float. At the same time, Sprig looks around the mall to find the perfect gift for Anne. Anne makes the finishing touch on the float in the attic, and Darrel grabs more lights for more pizzazz. When buying a gift was impossible, Sprig tries to make a gift instead.

Now it's the twenty fourth of December; Christmas Eve. The IT Gals get their truck hooked up to the float, and Darrel brings his family to the Boonchuys. Darrel smiles when the float arrives in front of the house. "Wow, did you two do all this?" Sarah asked. "Well, we had some help," replied Darrel.

Anne brings her parents out, and they keep their eyes closed. "Okay, so I really wanted to do something special for you guys, since you've done so much for me," she said. "And well, open your eyes."

The Boonchuy parents open their eyes to see their Thai Go float ready for the parade. "SURPRISE!" Cheered Amelia, Jane, Jake,

Ivan, and the IT Gals. "Wow, this is amazing," said Mrs Boonchuy. "But what about keeping a low profile?"

"I got this," said Darrel. He takes his staff, sways it slowly in the air and enchants the Plantars' and Tint's disguises to make them look like humans. "Ho Ho uh, line?" Hop pop said. "Ho," corrected Polly. "Are you sure? Doesn't sound right," said Hop pop.

"There," said Darrel. "Now no one will suspect anything." "I wasn't going to let you give up your dream because of me," said Anne. "You wanted this for so long, you deserve it."

With nothing more than a smile on her face, Mrs Boonchuy hugs her daughter tightly. "It's perfect," she said. "Thank you so much." "Merry Christmas, mom," said Anne. "And thank you Darrel, for all your help," said Mrs Boonchuy. "You're welcome," said Darrel. "If I haven't gotten anything more than your smile today, I would be well repaid."

Mr Boonchuy tried to get another photo for the holiday, but failed again. "Gosh, dang it! I will get the perfect holiday photo. Or I will die trying!" Just then, a reindeer falls off the float and almost hits him. "I'm sorry, Santa !" he pleaded.

Later that day, the parade was on in the streets of Los Angeles. "Welcome everyone to the annual holiday parade," announced the announcer. "And introducing newcomers, Thai Go!" The Tahi Go float cruised with the other floats, standing out from the traditional Christmas floats.

"Ho, Ho, uh line?" said Hop pop. "Are you kidding me?!" Tint cried. "You're an actor!" Polly screamed. Cronaxx watched with delight, and lucky for him everyone thought he was a hologram for the float. Amelia and Jane threw candy canes and popcorn to the attendants.

"This is amazing," said Matthew. "Yeah," said Darrel. "Mrs Boonchuy, thank you for inviting us to participate on your float." He turns to see her shedding a few tears. Anne took notice as well, "Mom, what's wrong? If it's not perfect I'll fix it."

"No, no," said Mrs Boonchuy. "It's just really nice to be a part of the community like this." Darrel and Anne smile, listening to her more. "Ever since my husband and I came here from Bangkok, it's been a challenge fitting in. I have always thought that making it into this parade would mean we have finally done it."

"I can't argue with you there," said Darrel. "I understand what it's like, after months of being in Amphibia." "Me too," said Anne. "I had no idea you and Dad felt that way." Anne goes over to hug her mom. Then Darrel goes over to hug his own. "I'm so proud of you," said Sarah. "I know," replied Darrel.

Meanwhile, Andrias' drone was flying all over the streets of Los Angeles. "I can't wait to squash this stupid world," he said frustratingly. "At this rate it'll take a miracle to find Anne and Darrel."

The drone takes notice of the Thai Go float and spots the two humans riding on it. They stand with arms over each other's shoulders. Darrel cheered, saying hello to everyone. And Anne just announced their names, "Woo! I'm Anne Boonchuy! And that's Darrel Loyalitat, my boyfriend!"

"Well, that was easy," said Andrias. "Oh yeah, I remember this trees, nut smashers, red suited jolly man with a beard. Oh, that gives me an idea." Andrias takes the drone and lands behind Santa's head. "Let's get festive with this," he said as he inserted the drone's mainframe into the circuitry. "Well, Merry Christmas to me!"

Back on the float, the group dances on the float. And they completely forget all about trying to keep a low profile. "I love Christmas so much!" Mrs Boonchuy cried to the crowd. The crowd responds in festive cheers.

Mr Boonchuy gets behind the group getting ready to take another picture. "This is going to be so candid," he said. "Times two, with the Loyalitat family as well." The two families smiled and laughed, when suddenly a familiar voice booms behind them.

"Well hello, Anne Boonchuy and Darrel Loyalitat." Darrel and Anne turned away and were shocked to hear someone they thought they wouldn't hear on Earth. Mr Boonchuy took the photo, but the photo came out bad, again. "That's definitely ruined," he said.

"That voice," said Anne. "It can't be!" "Andrias?!" Darrel cried. "King Andiras is Santa?" Sprig asked. Tint squinted his eyes in hatred. "YOU! You've got a lot of nerve to come here on the holidays!"

Andrias uses the drone's controls and takes control of the robotic Santa. He gets out of his seat and turns around to the float. Thankfully, the crowd didn't panic, thinking it was all part of an act. Anne, Darrel, and their families however, knew this wasn't an act.

Andrias takes a large candy cane and throws it at the Thai Go float. That display of attack made the crowd grow uneasy. Polly jumps in front of the IT Gals driving the float. "We've gotta get out of here, now!" The two gazed at the giant robot in glory, until they snapped out of it.

They put the float in reverse and Andiras gives chase to the group. "Wait," teased Andrias. "You didn't get to open your presents!" "I don't want any presents from the likes of you!" Tint cried as he threw a rock on Santa's face. He hits Andrias, stunning him for a moment. "You're on the naughty list for sure, Tint Tormak!"

Andrias brings out two gift boxes on each shoulder, and launches them at the float. "Andrias! You dog!" Polly exclaimed. The gang take a sharp turn, and get ready to fight back. "Grab whatever you can, guys," said Anne as she takes a decoration and hits Andrias.

Darrel grabs his staff and prepares to cast a spell, but remembers that Amphibia technology is impervious. "Don't focus on the problem in front of you," said Cronaxx. "Look around for a solution." Darrel looks around the float and comes up with an idea. "If magic can't destroy this robot," Darrel casts a telepathic spell and throws physical projectiles at the robot. The spell was a success at damaging the enemy.

"Hey Now! That's not jolly!" Andiras cried. "I thought these robots were indestructible to magic!" "Never underestimate the power of a wizard!" Tint cried. "Leave our home alone!" Sarah cried.

Suddenly, the IT Gals braked at the sight of the road block. Trapping the group in the process. Andiras slowly creeps up on the group, making them try to think of another way to fight back. "Looks like this is the end of the road, kids," said Andrias. "Literally. And you both have been very bad this year."

Andrias fires up his mouth cannon at the float. "What do we have left to throw?" Sprig asked. "The tree!" Amelia cried. "That's all that's left. We should..." "Light it on fire?" Polly finished. "Finally!"

The family works together and takes the tree down and puts it into a fireworks cannon. Darrel enchants it into a magnet and makes the ornaments into sharp metal shards. Then, he lights the tree on fire. Tint lights the fuse getting ready to fire the tree.

"Hey Andrias," cried Anne. "Merry Christmas!" "Hey, thanks," he replied. "You too! Wait, No!" "And a Happy New Year!" Darrel shouted as the tree hit the robotic Santa. The tree pierces through and destroys Andrias' butterfly drone. Causing the robotic Santa to tumble backwards and fall to the ground.

"Daddy, is Santa going to be okay?" A kid asked across the street. "I don't think so, Timmy," said his father. "I don't think so."

Then, flakes come falling down from the sky, looking like snowflakes. However, when Sprig tasted the flakes, it was revealed to be ash. "It actually makes more sense," said Matthew. "This is Los Angeles after all."

Then, Darrel gets another buzz feeling. "Guys!" he cried. "What's wrong Darrel?" Tint asked. "I think I'm getting something," he replied. "I need to focus." He lets go of his struggling feeling and lets the magic do its work. His right eye snapped wide open, revealing an

orange glow. "What is that?" Anne asked. "I think it's one of the Core's eyes," replied Darrel. "I can see Andrias."

Back in Amphibia, Andrias was most upset that he lost his drone. So upset that he smashed his controller with his boots and signature sword. "Dang it!" Andrias shouted. "It's that stupid controller's fault! I was so close!" He slams his sword down in anger and defeat, causing Triple B to sneak out the throne room quietly.

Then, a dark sinister laugh was heard. It was the Core. Or in this case: Darcy Wu. "That was pathetic," mocked Darcy. "And you call yourself a king." Andrias looked down from his newly hosted master, only to turn away and walk out to his balcony. "It doesn't matter," he said. "Against the full force of our army, none shall stand! Not those brats! Not Earth! Not Anyone!" He stares down at the fully prepped squads of frog bots, ready for Darcy and Andrias' invasion.

Darrel's eye starts to close, indicating that the magic is done showing him what was going on. "What did you see?" Polly asked. "I saw Andrias' army," replied Darrel. "He and the Core are prepped and ready for invasion." "We're going to stop them," said Tint. "We will," said Darrel. "But for now, let's go home."

Back at the Boonchuy residence, Mrs Boonchuy laughed at what transpired at the Palooza. "That was so dangerous," she said. The rest of the group laughed and Tint removed his and the Plantars' disguised enchantments.

"A murderous Santa robot," said Mr Boonchuy. "Never thought I'd see that," said Matthew. "Scary stuff," said Sprig. "It was the combination of jolly and murderous that really made it feel special," said Hop pop.

"So Anne, after all we've been through," said Tint. "Can you help us clarify what the true spirit of Christmas is?" "Yeah," said Hop pop. "We're dying to know. Everything about this holiday's confusing my frog brain!"

"Oh yeah," said Anne. "I haven't told you yet. Well, I guess it's about spending time with the people you love. And all the presents and traditions are just a way to express that love." "But, at the end of the day, all that matters is that we're together," said Mrs Boonchuy. "Like your father. He's still happy even though he didn't get his perfect photo."

Mr Boonchuy just smiled, "Oh didn't I?" He reached in his pocket and surprised the group. "Wow," said Jane and Amelia. "Candid, baby," said Mr Boonchuy. "We look awesome," said Darrel. The photo showed the group dancing their victory over the destroyed Santa robot.

"So it's not about the gifts at all?" Sprig asked. "It's mostly the thought that counts," said Darrel. "Why'd you ask?" "Because I tried to get Anne the perfect present, but it's not that good," replied Sprig. "I'm sure she'll like it either way," said Tint.

Anne gets Sprig's gift and opens it. It's revealed to be a hand crafted minifigure of herself. "Is that supposed to be me?" Anne asked. "It is," replied Sprig. "Because you're my hero." "Thanks dude," said Anne. The two best friends hug it out, smiling.

Anne turns over to see Darrel with his gift for her. "Is that meant for me too?" Anne asked. "It is," replied Darrel. "But according to Loyalitat tradition, we only get to open one Christmas gift tonight. And you already opened yours from Sprig." "Aww man," said Anne.

"Okay everyone," said Mr Boonchuy. "Let's go inside and eat cookies! Matthew, Sarah, your family are more than welcome to join us." "Thank you so much," said Sarah. Then, the Loyalitats and the Boonchuys raced inside the house to celebrate.

Outside, across the street of the house, the Busker was seen again playing her guitar. " *Whatever makes you happy Whatever gets you through Whatever lets you know that I am feeling this with you If you believe it's special Then that's what makes it special It's a special, it's a special It's our special time of year* "

It started getting late, and the Loyalitats were ready to leave for home. Darrel needed the restroom before the journey back, but then got out ready to go. But before he could, he spotted Anne writing a letter.

"Hey Anne," said Darrel. "Who are you writing to?" Anne was a little hesitant, but she replied, "Our friends' parents." Darrel was stunned, because he completely forgot that even though he and Anne are back home, Sasha and Marcy are still stuck in Amphibia. And they are not celebrating the holidays with their parents. "Oh yeah."

' I can't imagine spending the holidays without your family. I know how hard it is to be apart and not know if you'll ever see each other again. So I'm writing to let you know that your daughter is alive. She's trapped in another world, but I promise, I'm going to bring her back home safe. Signed, a friend. '

Darrel smiled at the letter, then looked over to the envelopes of Marcy and Sasha's parents. Darrel was stunned again as he paid more attention to Sasha's parents. "She never told me," said Darrel. The envelopes say Mr Waybright and Mrs Waybright, implying that Sasha's parents are either separated or divorced. "I guess she told me in confidence," said Anne. "I guess that makes us even for me not telling her about my mom's sickness," said Darrel.

He gives Anne his gift to her and says, "Merry Christmas, Anne Boonchuy." As he was about to leave, Anne grabs his arm and holds him under the archway. Anne gives a warm smile and says, "Merry Christmas, Darrel Loyalitat." She looks up, indicating for Darrel to do the same. He looks up and smiles seeing a mistletoe hanging above them. The two share a joyful loving tender kiss, and then stare in each other's eyes. "Best gift ever," said Darrel. "Thank you."

Christmas Day had arrived and both families were enjoying themselves. Anne and Darrel gave their mothers their respectful gifts they got from Amphibia. Both their mothers were so happy in response to their gifts. The Plantars got their gifts as well, and were so happy. Tint smiled at his gift, a can of silly string, and sprayed it all

over the family. Cronaxx laughed and laughed, knowing that Tint may get them, but he can't get his uncle. Tint didn't mind, as long as he was there until he could move on. For what it was worth for Darrel and Anne, this was the best Christmas they have ever celebrated.

Until our Next Meeting

Chapter 60 - Until our Next Meeting

Time had passed after the Christmas celebrations, and Anne, Darrel, and their friends have worked tirelessly on how to get back to Amphibia. They have recruited as many friends as they possibly can. Darrel and Tint got back to the swing of magic training. Mr X was still embarrassed with how things turned out with him. But he wasn't willing to give up so easily.

One day, Darrel wakes up from his sleep and looks to himself in the mirror. His past self appears in the reflection, still in his wizard robes. He looks weary to present Darrel, knowing his return to Amphibia is very soon.

"Be careful," said his past self. Darrel looks with realization, and breathes. "I know," he replied. "This has never happened before." His past self nods, "What are you going to do if he comes? If they come?" "Only one thing I can do," was all present Darrel replied as he looked away from his past self.

Darrel goes out in the backyard to see Tint play tea time with Jane, and Amelia practicing her soccer drills. Darrel smiles at them, then looks down at his staff. He calls to his parents, "Mom, Dad! Can you come out here for a minute?"

Jane, Amelia, and Tint look to Darrel who looks like he has an idea. "What are you up to, bro?" Amelia asked. "I'm just worried," replied Darrel. "I don't know what's going to happen next. And I care about you guys so much, it's going to be hard to leave you behind."

"That's why I want to create a fail safe in case Andrias and the Core arrive with their army." Matthew and Sarah enter the backyard as Darrel waves his staff in the air. A magical aura surrounds the four family members. Darrel shakes up at first, considering he never tried

something like this before. But he let's go of his worry and continues to let the magic do its work.

As the magic aura dies down, the Loyalitat family feels a tad off. "Why do I feel more hyped than before?" Amelia asked. "Because I've blessed you all with an enchantment," replied Darrel.

"Amelia, you've got super speed." Amelia was shocked to hear him say that. So as she prepares to run, she finds herself on the other side of her neighbors backyard. And the fence dividing the yards was blown away. Amelia rushed back, and Darrel magically fixed the fence. "Wow! That was awesome!" Amelia cheered.

"Jane, whenever you dance you have the ability to conjure up fire. But be cautious, that fire will spread." Jane gets in position for a ballet opening, then her signature ballet tutu starts to glow fire embers. As she danced, fire began to glow from her hands to her feet. When she stopped, the fire rescinded. "Cool, I felt like the Firebird for a moment," she said.

"And Mom, you have the ability to heal others at the touch of your hand. Even crafting homemade foods can heal people too." Tint takes Matthew's hand and burns his palm, just to test out her gift. She takes his hand, and it magically heals back to normal. "Wow."

"Dad, you have the gift to fly at great heights and have the strength of a thousand men." Matthew takes position in the backyard and launches himself in the air. He does barrel rolls, loop de loops, and touches down to the ground. Then, he goes out to their car and lifts it up like it was a regular box. A small kid on a tricycle watched the whole thing and was shocked. "Just some personal issues," said Matthew.

"I've given you guys these gifts in case Andrias comes here," said Darrel. "But don't get used to them, because this is only temporary." "It's more than enough," said Sarah. Then, Darrel's phone goes off. It was Anne.

'Meet us at the warehouse on the other side of town, the portal is almost ready.' Darrel smiled, "Let's go open up a portal to a new world." The family gets into the car and drives off to the warehouse.

Inside the warehouse, Anne and the Plantars were waiting for the chance to open the portal. Darrel arrives with Tint and his family. "Hey Darrel, are you ready for this?" Anne asked. "You know it," replied Darrel as they high-fived each other.

"Ah, you must be Anne's friend Darrel." Darrel looks over to see a blue haired scientist programming on the controls. "And you must be Terry," said Darrel. "Sorry I didn't show up at the science emporium, I had some issues to sort out." "You didn't miss much," said Terry. "Just some crazy boss trying to make a name for herself instead of helping out others."

"Oh, gotta love this avocado roast," said Hop pop. He holds up a piece of bread with avocado toppings on it. "It's avocado toast dude," corrected Anne. "In Amphibia, the avocados are covered with poison barbs that cause blindness," said Hop pop. "But here, they're just creamy and delicious."

"How's the portal coming, Terry?" Sprig asked. "Pretty good," she replied. "Come over here. When you told me about the Calamity box. I wondered: why a music box?"

"Actually, I have the solution," said Cronaxx. "I chose the music box because of the magical element in the music notes. Countless worlds, infinite possibilities, all connected with numerous musical combinations. These music notes were able to pinpoint specific worlds."

"With music," said Darrel. "Cronaxx you were a genius!" "I still am," said Cronaxx. "And I always will be." The rest of the group clapped with amazement. "And now the million dollar question," said Terry. "Does anyone remember a song playing when they were in a portal between here and Amphibia?"

Anne, the Plantars, and Tint hum in different paces, confusing Terry. "Guys, guys," said Darrel. "Stop, stop, stop. We need only one person to play the notes." "I think it was: Hmm hmm hmm hmm hmmm," said Anne.

Terry repeats the notes and turns on the power generators to open the portal. "Fingers crossed everyone." Dr Jan uses her car to rev up the power supply. The portal only opens up a tiny bit, but enough to show something on the other side.

"That's as big as I can make it," said Terry. "Do you see anything?" The group looks through a telescope and sees a giant praying mantis feeding on a rat. "Gross," said Anne. "Giant bugs," said Darrel. "Definitely Amphibia." "Wonder if the mantis can smell us," said Sprig. The mantis reaches through the portal to grab Sprig. But Terry closes the portal, causing the mantis to lose its arm.

"That's your world?" Mr Boonchuy asked. "Home sweet home," replied Hop pop. "Nice job, Terry," said Anne. "Now that we have the location, is there any way we can make that portal bigger?" Darrel asked. "Well, I'm going to need way more power than I have right now," replied Terry. "Other than that, we're on the right track."

"I don't believe it, we're so close to getting back to Amphibia," said Anne. Darrel takes her hands and smiles, "Once we cross, we stop Andrias and get our friends back," said Darrel. "You two are very impressive kids," said Dr Jan. "Traveling to another world, leaving your families behind again, not knowing when you'll see them next. That's brave."

"I haven't really thought of that until now," said Anne. "I would not believe it if I hadn't just seen it," said Mr Boonchuy. "That was incredible," said Mrs Boonchuy. "The best thing I've gotten to see in such a long time," said Sarah. Both families look at their kids in joy and wonder. Anne looks down with disappointment, while Darrel gives a small smile knowing what this means for them.

"Alright everyone, listen up," said Terry. "Dr Jan and I think we can get the portal bigger. But, here's a list of supplies I think we're going to need." She texts the group the list of supplies.

"Fifty thousand kilowatts of power generators," said Mr Boonchuy. "Four hundred cubic meters of ice," said Matthew. "Eight gallons of yogurt covered pretzels?" Sarah asked. "The portal needs yogurt covered pretzels?" Mrs Boonchuy asked. "Yes," was all Terry said with a blank face.

"Looks like the only place we'll find all this is SpendCo!" Mr Boonchuy cheered. "Spend-wha?" Hop pop asked. The group arrives at the front of an entrance and announces the store's name again. "SpendCo!" The amphibians gasp in amazement at how big the store is. "They got avocados here?" Hop pop asked. "They've got everything here," replied Anne.

While Anne starts looking at her phone, she is suddenly stopped by her father. He wears an evil spaceman's mask and wields a toy plasma sword. He challenges her to a fight. "We meet again, Anne Boonchuy," he said. The mask helped make his voice sound metallic and evil. "The only way to save your father is to defeat me!"

He gives Anne his red sword, while holding a blue one. "Dad, I'm too old for this," groaned Anne. "Aw, really?" Mr Boonchuy was a little upset that his daughter didn't want to play. But then, "Nope!"

Anne strikes with her toy and playfully attacks her father. Using her sword and parkour skills, she was able to strike her father down in defeat. "Hey go easy on your old man," begged Mr Boonchuy.

"Woah, sorry," said Anne. Then out of nowhere, her mother dawns a cloak and playfully stabs her daughter in the back. "Gotcha, I was your mother the whole time." "These parents are the worst," acted Anne, and played dead after being stabbed. They shared a laugh, escaped a store clerk, and high-fived one another. Spending time with her family made Anne choke up, and then decided to go find her friends.

While the rest of the group look for more supplies, Darrel finds Anne and Sprig at the patio aisle. He finds Anne looking glum, and he knows why. So he goes over to talk to her.

"Anne, are you okay?" Darrel asked. "Yeah, I'm fine," she replied. "But are you okay, in here?" Sprig asked, pointing to her heart. Anne sighed, "Not really. I've been so focused on opening the portal and getting back to Amphibia, I haven't thought about what I'll be leaving on this side. My parents."

Darrel smiled sadly and took her hands. "Hey, it'll be okay," he said. "Look, you're not the only one who's thinking the same thing. Our parents are great, and it'll be tough to say goodbye. But I know that they count on us to do the right thing. I'm not giving up. Not on them, not on my friends, and not even you. So whatever we face next, we'll face it together."

Anne smiled, "You really are the best, Darrel." "I do what I can," said Darrel. Anne kisses him on the cheek, making the two blush. "What if we wait a couple days?" Sprig suggested. "You two could spend more time with your parents. I'm sure Amphibia can wait a little while longer."

"Unfortunately we can't," said Tint. "Darrel saw Amphibia being destroyed and we need to stop Andrias." "Gangway!" Hop pop called. He comes in with a cart full of avocado pears and products. "Holy guacamole!" Anne cried.

"That's a lot of avocados," said Darrel. "Avocado hummus, avocado oil, avocado face masks, there's avocado everything. I share it all with Amphibia, we'll be set for life." Then, Frobo comes in with RC wheels and a tail fin.

"Nice wheels Frobs," said Tint. "You like his new treads?" Polly asked. "We stopped by the RC car aisle." "What's with the DVD's?" Anne asked. "Oh nothing much," replied Polly. "Just my favorite Die Difficulty films. Bryce Wallis is an action movie genius." Polly inserts

the movie in Frobo's mouth, and his eyes project the movie on the screen.

After the group gets the supplies, Mr Boonchuy stuffs them in the car like a game of Tetris. Even stuffed the Plantars in with the supplies as well. "Alright that's the last of it," said Mr Boonchuy. "See I told you we would all fit. Right guys?" "Snug as a bug Mr Boonchuy," said Hop pop. "I knew there was a reason I married you," said Mrs Boonchuy.

Suddenly, FBI trucks pulled up to their location. They were boxed in, with no way of escape. Darrel and Tint see this from their parents' car and make their way to help Anne and the Plantars. A squad of soldiers jump out of the truck and surround the Boonchuys. Then, Mr X comes out behind them.

"Looks like we've caught you at last, my little froggies," he said with a mischievous grin. "Frogs? What Frogs?" Hop pop asked in denial. Mr X didn't have time to play dummy, so he used his watch device to laser off Hop pop's disguise. Hop pop was left in his underwear, feeling embarrassed.

"Quick you guys! RUN!" Anne cried. The four escape in between the cars to evade X's grasp. Then, they come across Darrel and Tint. "Anne! They're on us!" Darrel cried. "The jig is up already," said Sprig pointing to Hop pop. "At least they spared him that particular indignity," said Tint. "Come on!" Anne cried.

The group runs further in the parking lot, only for Jerry to catch Anne and Darrel with a net gun. "Anne!" Sprig cried. "Darrel!" Tint cried. Suddenly, the four amphibians were caught by a strong agent. As they squirm, Mr X walks up to the humans.

"Anne and Darrel. So we finally have names. I gotta say kids, you've caused me a lot of grief. But, that's all over now." "Let my friends go!" Darrel cried. "If you do anything to them, I swear to god!" "You'll what? Hurt me?" Mr X asked. "You know you don't want to do that. Pack it up boys."

"What about the kids and the parents?" asked the strong agent. Mr X looked at them and just said, "Leave them, there's nothing they can do now." Mr X hops on the truck and puts the amphibians in a cage behind them.

As Darrel watches Tint being taken away, the two glance at each other. Tint could perform his magic, but Darrel shook his head no. "Not yet," he whispered. He didn't want to use magic since Mr X doesn't know that yet.

As their friends are taken away, Matthew and Sarah find Darrel tangled up in a net trap. Mr Boonchuy cuts him and Anne loose, and Anne hugs Darrel out of grief. "We'll get them back, Anne," said Darrel. "I made a promise. Mr Boonchuy, we have to-" "Go after them, I know," he said. "Matthew, take your girls back to the warehouse, then call all the friends our kids encountered." "You got it," said Matthew. "We're going to need all the help we can get."

As they began chasing in their car, Anne realized something. "Darrel, why didn't you use your magic to escape from them?" "Because neither Mr X or the government knows yet," said Darrel. "I told Tint not to use his powers before they took him. That way, we'll have the element of surprise." Anne smiled, "Clever thinking. But, when is it a good time to use them?" "Only and absolutely necessary," replied Darrel.

While they're talking, Mrs Boonchuy keeps the FBI trucks in sight. Then, they find the trucks entering a secret facility outside of town. "Okay, now we know where they're taking our friends," said Darrel. "Time to scope things out," said Mrs Boonchuy.

The group takes a freeway pass overlooking the facility. They see the trucks enter with clearance. "Looks pretty secure," said Mr Boonchuy. "Yeah," said Darrel. "This is going to be more than just two families to handle. We're going to need all the help we can get." Anne takes out her phone and starts making calls.

Inside the facility, Mr X began interrogating the amphibians. Starting with Hop pop Plantar. He shines a light above the restrained frog. "Geez, we thespians love the spotlight, but can you turn this thing down?"

"Who do you work for?" X demanded. "No one," replied Hop pop. "I've been working for myself since I took over the farm." "The farm," X asked. "Is that what you call your nefarious alien headquarters?" "Uhh, No," replied Hop pop. "Say, do you guys have any avocado toast?" Mr X was stunned with Hop pop's response.

He moves on to Sprig, "Alright Pinky, I want to know everything. Start from the beginning!" Sprig decides to take his request literally. "I was born on a humid swampy evening. Just a tiny cute tadpole with big dreams." Mr X wasn't buying into any of it, and regretted asking for it.

He moves on to Polly next, "What's your master plan?" Polly answered truthfully, "Duh, to eliminate my enemies and take over the world!" Mr X took her answer from his perspective. "A HA! Now we're getting somewhere. Tell me more."

"Jeez, we're going to be here a while," said Polly. She takes out her list and starts naming the names that peeved her. Mr X stopped her from naming anymore and picked up Frobo. "What is this thing? Some kind of bomb?" "Oh, he's the bomb alright," replied Polly. "Ain't ya Frobes?" Frobo responds by spraying oil in Mr X's face. He responds by presenting a doctor holding a needle. And Polly writes on the bottom of her list adding Mr X and the doctor.

Now it was Tint's turn. "So, what kind of dinosaur creature are you?" Mr X asked. "I'm a salamander," replied Tint. "What do you want from me? The truth?" "I want to know what you're planning," said Mr X. "Simple," replied Tint. "To get back home and stop the invasion!" "So there is an invasion! The little girl frog was right!" Mr X cheered. "But I don't want to invade your home," said Tint. "The king wants to. And you have no idea what he's like. Keeping me here would just be prolonging the inevitable, unless you let us go." "That's not going to happen little Compy," said Mr X.

Back at the warehouse, Anne and Darrel's family gathered everyone they could to rescue Tint and the Plantars. There was Ivan, Jake, Jess and Ally, Molly Jo, Humphrey, and some people from the Thai Temple. Terry and Dr Jan were there too. Anne and Darrel explain their situation, shocking some of the members who didn't know they were amphibians.

"Now, we need your help to save them," said Anne. "This is serious business." "I can assure you all this is going to be dangerous," said Darrel. "If we get caught we'll all be in trouble. So if you want to bail, we understand."

The group smiles and doesn't back down. "We're with you," said Humphrey. "To the end!" He gives a dramatic pose, impressing Molly Jo.

"Alright, here's the plan," said Anne. "Step one: Get into the compound by bringing them something they want." The Thai community dress Humphrey to look like a humanoid frog, allowing them access to the main gate. However, they're blocked by security asking for clearance.

"Next secure entry into the compound." Molly Jo sneaks in the toll booth and uses a panda bot to hack into the FBI security computer and allow access to the main gate. The card works and the four enter the compound.

Later, the group sneak into a hole in the gate, with tuxes to pass as agents and get access from the Thai commuters, Humphrey, and Molly Jo. They open the door allowing the rest into the building. "Nice work," said Darrel. "Now all we have to do is find our friends and return the rental suits."

The group race in the facility, looking for their friends. Then, Jane, Amelia, Jacob, Dr Jan, and Terry find a power generator outside one of the doors. "You guys thinking what I'm thinking?" Jake asked. "We can use this generator to power the portal," said Amelia. "That could

power it all on its own," said Terry. "Let's grab it," said Jane. The five split from the group and get to nabbing the power generator.

The rest of the group look to find a door that says Specimens A,B,C,D. "This must be where our friends are," said Anne. They get inside the room and look around. They see a glass case that looks like Hop pop is in. "Hit the lights," said Matthew.

Sarah turns on the lights and the glass case reveals to be the same animals Mr and Mrs Boonchuy purchased to fool Mr X. "What the," said Anne. Suddenly, Darrel realized something. "It's a Trap!"

Oh boy, was he right. Before they know it, Mr X closes the door and a couple of guards surround them. "Hahaha. Payback stings, doesn't it?" Before long, the group gets locked up, sharing three cells close together.

"What have you done with our friends?!" Anne asked. "Give them back!" "Sorry honey," said Mr X. "But they're government property now." Darrel slams on the bar doors with his fists. "They're no one's property!" he shouted. "You can't do this to them!"

"I can do whatever I want," said Mr X. "I'm a highly specialized top federal agent. And you two are nothing but children. You wouldn't even have gotten this far without your mommies and daddies."

Darrel angrily spits in X's face, glaring at him with pure hate. "You have no idea who I am and what I can do. So watch your back X." "How rude," said X as he wiped his face clean of spit. "Just face it kids. It's time to stop playing hero, before it gets you all in serious trouble. Oh wait, you're already in serious trouble."

As Mr X walks away laughing, Darrel growls, "I haven't even begun making trouble for you." "It'll be okay, Darrel," said Cronaxx. "Where there's a will there's a way." "It's funny that he couldn't see you," said Darrel. "Then again, I don't think this facility can detect ghosts."

He turns from the cell door and finds Anne curled up into a ball. "He's right," said Anne. "I *am* just a kid. How am I supposed to save my friends, beat the FBI, defeat King Andrias, if I can't even bring myself to say goodbye to my parents?"

Mr and Mrs Boonchuy look down seeing their daughter give up. The weight on her shoulders made her feel vulnerable, defenseless, the same way Darrel felt when he was going through a lot without his powers. Darrel felt upset seeing her like this. "All this time I thought I could do these things," said Anne crying. "But I was wrong."

"No, you're not," said Darrel. He gently places his hands on Anne's shoulders, getting her attention. "I know this is something you can do." "He's right," said Mrs Boonchuy, sitting beside her daughter. "If anyone can do this, it's you," said Mr Boonchuy, sitting as well.

"How do you all know?" Anne asked. "Let's see," said Darrel. "Survive in a strange new world nearly everyday for months: Check. Made new friends along the way: Check. Reunite with old friends: Check. Defending for others that couldn't: Check. Build an amazing float for your family: Check. Defeated two killer robots: Check. Also brave, determined, loyal, cheeky, kind, and not knowing when to quit when things go south."

Mr and Mrs Boonchuy smiled. "Darrel's right, Anne," said Mrs Boonchuy. "You have grown so much. You're not my little girl anymore. You can do this." "And no matter where you go, or what you're doing, we'll be with you the whole way," said Mr Boonchuy. He points to her heart. "Right here."

Anne smiled, "Thanks guys," said Anne hugging the three. "And Darrel," said Mrs Boonchuy. "Yeah," said Darrel. "I really appreciate you being there for our daughter. You have my blessing to date her." "And you have mine too," said Mr Boonchuy. "And ours," said Sarah hugging Matthew. "Thanks mom and dad," said Darrel. "I wished my parents believed in me like that," said one of the agents guarding the door.

Suddenly, the power went out, causing all the lights to turn off. "What's happening?" Anne asked. Ivan looks out to see Terry, Jan, Amelia, Jane, and Jake take the facility's power generator. "Our friends got the base's generator," he said. "The entire compound is shut down." "Which means a glitch in the power locks," said Jess as she opened the cell doors. "FREEDOM!" Humphrey cried.

The group make their way to the exit, but the guards ahead stop them. "I may be touched by your story, but I'm still going to stop you," said the guard. Darrel sighed, "I think I've had enough of this." He magically makes his staff appear and sprinkles a bit of magic dust at the guards. "Sleeeeeeeeeeeep," he said in a calm tone. The guards instantly fall asleep and Darrel and Anne escape.

With the power down and the emergency lights on, the guards were on high alert. Down a long corridor, they spot Anne and Darrel prepped and ready to fight. "Get them!" cried the guards.

Darrel looks to his enemies, takes Anne's hand, raises up his staff and shouts, "TIME BREAK!" Before he knew it, Darrel slowed down time, and he and Anne walked up and took quick hits at the oncoming guards. They make their way back to get the rest of the group and rescue their amphibious friends.

Meanwhile in the lab where they are, Mr X and the doctor notice the power outage. "I'll go restart the generator," said Mr X. "Don't let them out of your sight." Mr X leaves the lab, and the doctor stays put.

The amphibians suddenly hear a noise coming from the ceiling. The noise stops above them and the vent opens up. "What up, fam!" Anne cried. "Anne," cheered the Plantars. And jumps down and so does Darrel. "We're here to rescue you guys," said Darrel. "Hey, who are you two? You can't be in here," said the doctor.

Tint uses his magic to open Frobo's cage and Frobo attacks with dvd discs. Knocking the doctor unconscious. "Well done Tint," said

Darrel. "Thanks buddy," said Tint as he magically frees himself and the Plantars.

"Wait a minute," said Polly. "You could've done that this whole time?! Why didn't you when we could get out of here?!" "Because then, you would've lost the element of surprise," said Cronaxx. "Had Tint or Darrel used their powers, the agents would know about it and secure them more tightly."

"Are you guys okay?" Anne asked. "Mostly," replied Hop pop. "My dignity is admittedly in shambles." "So what's the plan on getting out of here?" Polly asked.

Then out of nowhere, a truck rams into the wall revealing the humans and the generator inside. "Need a ride?" Terry asked. Anne, Darrel, and the amphibians all climb into the van. "Alright gang," said Dr Jan. "Buckle up." The doctor drives into the wall again and escapes the facility.

Mr X spots them leaving, and tells the guard to shut the gate. "Shut the Gate! Shut the Gate!" The guard does what he's told and drops the toll arm, blocking the way. But Dr Jan rams into the arm, breaking it in the process and escaping the compound. "Don't know why we thought that would work," said the guard.

Mr X calls for backup and gives chase to Anne, Darrel, and their friends. Tint and the Plantars throw junk at the trucks, causing one of them to crash. Then, Polly uses Frobo to squirt oil on the second van's windshield. Causing the van to swerve out of control and crash too.

Mr X didn't want to give up. He uses special gadgets that make his shoes magnetic and cling onto the truck. Just as he jumped onto their truck. Tint and Sprig fling a barrel at the agent. "Oh you've got to be kidding me," he said. The barrel hits Mr X, causing the substance to cover the windshield. The group escape, leaving Mr. X in the dust. "They may have gotten away, Jenny," said Mr X. "But not

before I tagged them!" And he was right. Before they flung the barrel, Mr X placed a tracking evince on the truck.

The gang return to the warehouse, hooking up the generator they stole from the compound. Those who weren't tech experts placed bags of ice on the devices to keep them from overheating.

Anne and Darrel, now donning on their old clothes and Amphibia gear, were impressed with how far they've come. Anne was even wearing two of her yellow shoes this time. "I don't believe this," said Anne. "We did it!" "We sure did," said Darrel.

"Grab the other generators," said Terry. "We've got one shot at this." Everyone did as they were told and got prepared. They placed ice on the generators, settled up the portal coordinates, and kept an eye out for any agents coming their way.

Darrel and Anne look back to their families and see them smiling. They walk over to say goodbye. This time, they're doing it right. "Here, for your trip," said Mrs Boonchuy, handing over her backpack full of essentials; food, water, a photo of her and her family, and an extra pair of shoes in case she loses the others. "Guys, this is amazing," said Anne. "We have had your care package prepared for a while," said Mrs Boonchuy. "Waiting for this very moment."

"And here's yours Darrel," said Sarah, handing over his pack. His contains a strap-on bed roll, a couple CD's of his favorite songs, a photo of his family, a photo of him and his friends all in one shot, his old laptop, and strapped on the back was his old password that he forgot. His family however, didn't. "To think I wanted to get back home, just to see mom before she goes," said Darrel. "Now I'm here, with a new mission: to go back, and get my friends."

"You made a promise after all," said Amelia. "And you never break promises," said Jane. "That's the Loyality way," said Matthew. Both teens hug their families goodbye. "We are so proud of you," said Mr Boonchuy. "The both of you. Now go finish this thing, and bring your friends home."

Now it was tint and the Plantars' turn to say goodbye. The Plantars hugged the Boonchuys. "Thanks Mr and Mrs B,for everything," said Sprig, on the verge of tears. "We'll miss you," said Polly. "We'll take good care of the kids," said Hop pop. "Thanks for being there for me," said Tint. "No matter how bad life throws at me." "Life is going to be better for you," said Matthew. "Amphibia, or here, you are my son Tint. End of story." Tint hugs the Loyalitat family tightly one more time. Then, the amphibians prep up and stand by the portal with Darrel and Anne.

"Everyone ready?" Terry asked. "Got everything?" "We're ready," said Anne. "Fire it up," said Tint. "All set," said Hop pop, reaching for his pocket. "I've got one avocado left. To seed my avocado dynasty."

"Alright, here we go," said Terry. She pushes the start button, and the power diverts to the portal device. The device powers up, but the group is disappointed. "Oh no," said Anne. Turns out, with the generator, it still wasn't enough to make the portal bigger. "We can't fit through," said Sprig. "Guys, what can we do?" Anne asked.

"That was twice the power we estimated it would need," said Terry. "If that didn't work I'm afraid nothing will." Darrel looks down in defeat, but then Cronaxx points to his staff. Darrel smiles, "A wizard once said, that they know no such word as impossible. Because wizards can do the impossible."

Tint smiled as well, "If the calamity box is powered by both science and magic, then we just need to give it more juice." Darrel raises his staff and Tint raises his hands. Planning to give the portal device a touch up of electricity from the two wizards.

But before they could, the FBI entered the warehouse from the windows and the doors. "Everybody freeze!" "Nobody move!" The FBI surrounds the group, making Darrel so irritated. "Oh, come on!"

They hear a slow clap coming from in front of them, and Mr X appears once again. "Not bad, you two," he said. "Not bad. Turns out

you were more capable than I thought. But you two still failed, because no matter what you do, you're still just kids."

Darrel suddenly grinned and chuckled a bit. "What's so funny, young man?" X asked. "Why do you think I let you come in here?" "Huh? What are you talking about?" "I was going easy on you the entire time," said Darrel "As a matter of fact, we were both going easy on you."

Suddenly a force of wind picked up surrounding the two teens. "And you're right X," said Anne. "We are just kids. But today reminded us that with the right people by our sides, we can do anything!" Darrel and Anne suddenly started glowing their respected calamity powers, shocking X and the agents. Anne slams her foot down causing a shockwave and knocking them down.

"What are you?" Mr X asked. "The question is not what," said Darrel. "It's who. And we are Darrel Loyaltat and Anne Boonchuy!" "Guys, the portal!" Sprig called out. The two look at the portal suddenly growing. Darrel smiles knowing he and Anne have the power to open it up. They reach their hands out to the portal and create enough energy to make the portal big enough to fit them through.

"The portal," said Dr Jan. "How is that possible?" Terry asked. "It's amazing," said Ivan and Jake. "They're powering it like some kind of human battery," said the IT Gals. "What is that place?" Mr X asked. "Men, seize them!"

The FBI Agents were about to capture the group, but Darrel whistled at the mantis and threw a batch of avocado oil on the ground. 'Glad I had it on me,' he thought. The scent catches the matis' attention and crosses the portal. The group uses the distraction to cross the portal, but not before the two teens look back to their parents one last time.

"Goodbye family," said Darrel. "Don't say goodbye," said Matthew. "Pop always says so long." "We love you," said Sarah, Jane, and Amelia. "Anne, take care," said Mrs Boonchuy. "We love you," said

Mr Boonchuy, pointing to his heart. The teens smile back, "So long," said Darrel, and the two cross the portal back to Amphibia.

The agents capture and stun the mantis, but in doing so, they destroy the machine. Closing the portal, permanently. Mr X was furious, and turns to the Loyalitats and the Boonchuys "You! I hope you're ready to explain yourselves."

Matthew simply takes X's hand and begins to crunch it with his special powers. "Ow ow ow ow ow! Mercy!" X cried. Sarah smiles and touches his hand, healing it back up. "What the-" "And we hope you're ready to listen," said Mr Boonchuy. "We've got a lot to talk about," said Mr Boonchuy. Mr X was shocked and scared at the same time. And he grew nervous knowing they were willing to tell him everything.

Anne and Darrel wake up on the other side of the portal. Anne was excited at first. Darrel however looked up and saw ash falling from the sky. "We made it!" Anne cheered. "I can't believe it!" "Don't start celebrating Anne," said Darrel. He helps Anne up and turn to the Plantars and the salamanders. They look stunned and sad at what they see.

"What's going on?" Anne asked. "The beginning," replied Darrel. They look to see Amphibia. But it was a much different place from the one they left. The beautiful grass terrain was all dug up by new robot factories being built. Smoke covered the lands of once beautiful insects nesting in homes. And finally, Andrias' castle was floating high in the sky, looming over the land with an iron fist. Making others squirm in fear.

Anne and Darrel were shocked. "What....happened here?" Anne asked. "Andrias," was all Darrel said. "Well my friends," said Cronaxx. "Welcome to the new Amphibia."

Recruiting the Resistance

Chapter 61 - Recruiting the Resistance

After many misadventures on Earth, our group arrives back home in Amphibia. But it is a much, much different place from the one they left. Where there once was green fields, growing fresh fruits and vegetables, and caravans traveling across the valleys, there is now an industrial crisis.

A world as dark and twisted as the heart of its overbearing giant tyrant king. All the hilltops were replaced by robot factories, toxic sludge contaminates the fresh waters, and farmers were forcefully evicted from homes as robot steamrollers demolished them. Up in the sky was much more than a castle that once stood proud in Newtopia. It was now a floating battleship, preparing for the departure for Earth, and other countless worlds.

The group watched in horror at the things Andrias had done to the once prosperous land. Anne turns to Darrel, "You saw this, didn't you?" she asked. Darrel gave a stern glare at the valley and said, "Yes. But this is much worse from the last time I saw it."

"Quick," said Hop pop. "Back to Wartwood!" The group make haste and return to the village of Wartwood without a second thought. They need to know what they're dealing with, what's going on, and how they can help stop this.

But when they got back to Wartwood, a terrible sight met their eyes. The town was already destroyed. Houses were flattened, businesses were deserted, even their statue was missing. The group was devastated, they feared they were too late.

Just then, they heard a noise not too far from them. They find a wild giant centipede eating rubble. It turns to see the group and shows it has glowing purple eyes with a glowing purple collar around its neck.

"Uh, nice giant centipede?" Anne soothed. But the giant insect roared at them, scaring them off. Polly jumps into action and kicks the monster down. "Now stay down!" Polly commanded. "Polly, look out!" Sprig cried.

Polly turns around to see the centipede get back up. The insect roars with intimidation, only to be blasted by a laser beam. The centipede falls in defeat, and four mysterious figures overlook with triumph. The collar on the centipede breaks, causing the glowing purple eyes to fade. The centipede gets back up and retreats underground.

"What the?" Anne asked. "Guys?" Darrel points to the figures approaching them. "Hey, thanks," said Anne. "Whoever you are." The three figures remove their helmets to reveal three familiar faces. Ms Croaker, One-eyed Wally, and a very buff Loggle. "Well, salt my slugs," said Ms Croaker. "It's you six."

"Technically, seven," said Cronaxx, appearing in front of the group. "Croaker, Wally, Loggle? Is that you?" Anne asked. "Yep," replied Loggle, flexing. "I've been lifting weights every single day since you two have been gone. Who knew I had these kinds of gains in me all along?"

The rest of the group come up to ask their friends what's going on. "I don't believe it," said the fourth mysterious figure. It comes up to Anne and Darrel and removes the helmet. That figure is revealed to be their old friend, Sasha. Her hair was down, and her eyes were filled with joy. "You're back!"

"Sasha!" Cried the two humans. They rush up to hug her, surprising her. "You're alive!" Anen exclaimed. "I promised you we would come back," said Darrel. "I'm sure you're aware that we have questions about what happened while we were gone." Sasha nodded, "Follow me and I'll explain."

The group make their way to the old Plantar farmhouse, barely destroyed, but guarded by Chuck. "Chuck," Sasha saluted. "Tulips," nodded Chuck. The group enters the house, and finds little damage

done inside. "Wait, our house is your secret hideout?" Hop pop asked. "Only the basement," replied Sasha. She knocks on the chimney, causing a secret door to open.

The group was surprised. "No way," said Sprig. "The Plantar family tunnels?" "Come on," said Sasha. The group followed her down the passage. And on the other side, their eyes were filled with amazement. "Welcome to the Resistance!" Sasha announced.

They find the tunnels were modified to work as a secret underground hideout. The rest of Wartwood modified their everyday lives like a mall on Earth. Captain Grime was down by the Wartwood statue, training young tadpoles into soldiers.

"Alright, let's get you up to speed," said Sasha. The group follows not far behind. "Marcy's been taken prisoner. But she's still alive." Darrel sighed, "I know that. I felt her presence." "You have?" Sasha asked. "Yes," replied Darrel. "But now, I'm worried. For all of us. I won't get into details now, but I warn you the next time we see her, it won't be her." "What do you mean?" Sasha asked. "We'll get to that later," said Anne. "What happened to the town?" "What do you think?" Sasha replied. "Andrias destroyed it. Now let's get you settled."

Sasha blows a horn to call the frogs of Wartwood to the center of the base. "Attention Wartwood," she began. "I'd like to introduce some new recruits." The group appears from behind the statue waving hello. The town of Wartwood rejoiced seeing their old friends again. "It's Anne, Darrel, the Plantars, and the Salamanders!" Bessie, the family's snail, chirped with happiness.

"The Plantars came back to Amphibia just in time," said Sasha. "To help us kick Andrias right in the big ol' tail!" The crowd cheered, then Darrel stepped up. "Now I'm not much of a speaker," he said. "But I have to agree with Sasha. We used to be safe in our homes above ground. And if Andrias thinks he can push us out for his own personal agenda, he's got another thing coming!" The crowd roars with excitement, making Sasha smile with excitement.

Then, she gives them overnight sacks for the group. "Here, go find yourselves a nice cave to inhabit," she said. Hop pop felt down looking at an old fashioned toothbrush. "I sure am going to miss the electric toothbrush," said Hop pop. "Cheer up Hop pop," said Sprig. "Maybe we can find a cave with some nice lykan to sleep on."

With the amphibians looking for a cave, Sasha, Anne, and Darrel were standing side by side once again. "Sash," said Darrel. "I hope we can put what happened in Newtopia aside." "Listen guys," said Sasha. "My days of toxic manipulation are over. And with Amphibia on fire, and Marcy in trouble, I thought we could be on the same side for a change." "Totally," said Anne. "We'll work out our own baggage later."

The three shake hands and Sasha's helmet closes her face shield by itself. "Hehe, what's with the hat?" Anen asked. Sasha opens up her helmet, "The Helmet of Authority," she explained. "Apparently Wartwood busts this out during wartimes so everyone knows who's in charge. Which reminds me..."

She removes her helmet and hands it over to Anne. Darrel was surprised, "You're giving the authority over to Anne?" "Wartwood has only been able to hold out this long because they were waiting for you two," said Sasha. "You stood up for them, you protected them, it's time for the both of you to lead them."

"I don't know," said Anne. "I don't think it's wise," said Darrel. "Amphibia's changed since we left, and you want us to take charge?" Sasha just smiled, "All in favor of Anne Boonchuy and Darrel Loyallitat as your new leaders?!"

The town grumbled in confusion, "But the Helmet can only choose one leader," said one of them. "How about I assume the role of Second-in-Command?" Darrel asked. The frogs instantly cheered for Anne to take the helmet. "Wow," said Anne. "This is a huge honor. And also a lot of pressure." Darrel touches her shoulder, "Don't worry, we can share that pressure." The crowd just doubles on their

cheers making the two more anxious. "That's more than I can handle," said Darrel. "Yeah, that's actually not helping," said Anne.

The group enters Sasha's main chambers, with strategic battle maps, and an old statue of herself from Toad Tower. "Alright, Sash," said Darrel. "What are we dealing with so far?" Sasha drops the collar she collected from the centipede, on the table.

"I'm sure you've seen the mind control collars that Andrias is using to control the local wildlife," said Sasha. "Controlling wildlife?!" Tint cried. "That's against mother nature!" "Indeed," said Sasha. She points on the map the location of where they're being made. "It turns out he's making them here."

"How do these things even work?" Anne asked. "Let me see," said Darrel. He takes a drop of substance dripping out of the collar, and uses a magnifying glass to see a glowing purple organism. "Just as I suspected," he said. "These collars contain an enzyme from a glowing fungus. Just like the ones Hop pop used on us." The group looks over to Hop pop, who looks irritated knowing what Darrel was talking about. "I turned you into zombies one time!" he exclaimed.

"The mission is simple," said Sasha. "Destroy the factory. If we're successful, it'll make a big dent in Andrias' army." "Sounds simple enough," said Darrel. "Alright," said Anne. "Let's do it." "Great," said Polly, holding out Anne's phone. "I'll call us a taxi app."

"That's not going to do us any good," said Darrel. "We're not on Earth anymore." "Fine," groaned Polly. "I guess we'll walk." "Anyone got any hand sanitizer?" Hop pop asked. "I never noticed how dirty Amphibia was." He revealed his dirty hands to the group. Sprig offers him some. "Don't worry HP, I got you," he said.

Sasha watches with surprise knowing that spending time on Earth made life in Amphibia a bit hard. "Wow, Earth made you three soft," she said. "Anyway, get some sleep everyone. We leave at dawn." The group agree and take their leave.

As they exit, Captain Grime enters the room. Darrel and Anne salute to the toad. "Hey Grime," said Anne. "Captain," said Darrel. Grime saluted back, "Welcome, Anne, Darrel. I mean, Commander and Wizard." "I know," said Anne. "Weird, right?"

After Anne and Darrel leave Sasha's quarters, Grime expresses his discomfort with Sasha's decision. "You gave Anne the helmet?!" "Yeah," said Sasha. "If Anne's here, I can't be in charge. It's just too complicated." "But they've never led an army," rebuffed Grime. "And they have no idea how much Amphibia has changed, or what we're up against!"

Sasha stared down at the scarred toad, "I said it's COMPLICATED! Besides, Darrel's a wizard, so he can help Anne if she's stuck on something." "Fine," complained Grime. "It just would've been nice to know that I was demoted, *again* !" Grime dismisses himself and the gang gets some shut eye.

The next day, Anne gathers Darrel, Tint, the Plantars, Sasha, Wally, Croaker, and Loggle for the mission. Anne stands on top of a rock with Darrel below standing beside her. "Okay, you guys!" Anne announced. "Let's go show Andrias what we're made of!"

"Which way, Commander?" Ms Croaker asked. "Oh, uh, no idea," said Anne. This made Ms Croaker lose her salute. "Didn't you take a picture of the map?" Sprig asked. "Aw shoot, dang it," replied Anne. "I'll go back and grab it."

"No need," said Darrel. "Sasha, the map if you please." Sasha hands over the map to the two, "Here's the map, with all the important parts labeled." "Thanks, Sash," said Anne. "But are you sure you shouldn't be leading this?" "It's only fair," said Darrel. "I'm okay with you in charge."

"No way," said Sasha. "You two should be in charge, not me." "Sash," said Darrel. "I'm okay with being Second-in-Command. I'll follow either one of you." "Then, Anne can do this," said Sprig. "She

steered us all from Earth back to Amphibia. Just follow your Anne-tuition." "Okay then," said Anne. "Here goes nothing!"

Along the way, Anne leads the group to the factory. However, every time they stop, they come across old dangers and new dangers. Whether it be toxic waste in water, quicksand, or robots ambushing them. Eventually, the group was tired and scratched up.

And finally, they made their way to the factory. The factory was surrounded by a deep crevice, containing sharp spikes at the bottom. The group was stumped at what to do. "How do we get across, Anne?" Loggle asked. "Yeah, what's your Anne-tuition telling you?" Wally asked.

Anne started to think about what to do next. Sasha took out a grappling hook, and Darrel was about to speak up. "How about we build a bridge out of ourselves?" Darrel and Sasha were shocked about her plan. "I saw it in a movie once, all these tiny mice worked together to steal oregano from a french restaurant."

"I don't want to be a doubter, Anne," said Darrel. "But, that's a bad idea." "How so?" Ms Croaker asked. "We haven't even measured the length of the crack. It might not be enough." "Well can't you and Tint levitate us over the cliff?" Wally asked. "We could," said Tint. "It'll have to be one at a time, though."

"That plan could actually work," said Anne. "Go for it." "You heard the leaders," said Sasha. "Let's get floating." Darrel and Tint wave their hands and start to levitate Ms Croaker first. They get her across no problem. "Well done, wizard kids," she said.

As they got to Hop pop, Sprig felt a little impatient and decided to jump for it. "This is taking too long! Catch me!" As Sprig jumped, Darrel had to think fast. He caught Sprig with his magic, but Sprig started shaking.

Sprig stopped moving and dangled over the cliff of spikes "What's going on?" Sprig asked. "I told you we can only focus on one person

at a time, Sprig," said Darrel. "I can't hold onto you much longer!" Sprig screamed until Sasha used her grappling hook to swing across the canyon. "Hang on." Anne grabs hold of Sasha and the two swing across with ease. Anne grabs Sprig and pulls him to the other side of the canyon.

Later, Darrel and Tint successfully bring the rest of the squad over, then themselves across. "That was way too close," said Darrel. "You could've been hurt, Sprig," said Anne. "Or worse," said Loggle. "Anyone else think this is going poorly?"

"I do," said Darrel. "And that's a lot coming from a wizard." Anne turns to Sasha, "Sasha I think it's clear that Darrel's right. I shouldn't be leading this expedition. Will you please take command and tell us what to do?!"

"No!" cried Sasha. "You need to be in charge!" "Sasha," said Darrel. "You know as well as I do, that Anne has no experience in leading a group, much less three friends. So listen to this wizard, and do what Anne is telling you! This is a scenario where failure is not an option. One slip up and we could get someone killed! That's why Anne can't lead!"

"We're also usually a lot quieter than this," said Wally. Just then, the factory started spewing pink flames. The doors automatically open revealing four glowing purple eyes. "What kind of creature is that?" Hop pop asked. Then, they hear a strange clicking noise. Darrel immediately perked at the sound. A sound he heard long ago.

"It can't be..." he said. The creature comes out revealing to be two creatures. One was an armored snake with a mind controlling collar and spiked helmet. The other was a dragonfly also wearing a mind control collar. Darrel was shocked and sad to see it. That dragonfly was Clipper, his old friend and companion.

"Clipper?" Darrel asked. "That's Clipper?!" Tint cried. "Who's Clipper?" Sasha asked. Clipper clicked his mouth and the snake

hissed at them. The group, except for Darrel, take cover. "Darrel, get out of there!" Sasha cried.

"Clipper, how could he do this to you?" Darrel asked. He was so lost in seeing his old friend, he didn't hear Sasha or anyone else telling him to get out of the way. Clipper lets go of the snake and takes a nosedive at the wizard. "Darrel!" Anne cried.

But just as Clipper swooped down, Sasha dives in and knocks Darrel out of the way. "Stop standing there and get to cover!" Darrel snapped out of his trance and followed her back to the group. "We have to stop them," he said.

"Everyone, ATTACK!" Anne shouted. "What kind of attack?" Loggle asked. With no strategy, Anne says, "Just whatever feels right!" The group charges at the snake and dragonfly, only to be knocked down by the large creatures. Tint tried to go after Clipper, but his jump wasn't enough to reach him. Darrel takes his staff, but couldn't bring himself to hurt Clipper. Anne charges at the snake, but it knocks the two humans down as well.

The two hear Hop pop scream and turn to see what's wrong. "What happened?!" Anne cried. "I got a grass stain on my pants," said Hop pop. "You're a farmer!" Darrel shouted. "You should be used to grass stains!"

Then out of nowhere, the giant snake eats the Plantars, and the other frogs. Tint jumps on Clipper's back and rides on him like a wild bull. Darrel looks at Sasha and decides that enough is enough. Anne can't guide her squad through unfamiliar terrain, she can't coordinate an attack, she can't lead a team in general. Darrel knew that this is something Sasha can do.

"Sasha, what do we do?" Anne asked. "Uh, you're in charge," replied Sasha, who is still hesitant on taking command. "Whatever you think is best, you got this." "NO, SHE DOESN'T!" Darrel shouted. He takes the helmet off Anne's head and passes it to Sasha. "Why won't

you take charge when you know you're good at this!? Just tell me why!"

"Because the last time I was in charge, I ruined our friendship!" Sasha cried. Anne was surprised. "And my attitude cost me a great relationship with you Darrel," continued Sasha. Darrel was shocked. "I lost you as a great boyfriend, and I can't take back all the things I did to you. But I thought if I let you two take charge for a change, you'd see I've changed."

"Sasha," said Darrel. "If there's one thing I know in this situation, it's that you clearly know what to do." Sasha looked up to Darrel. "You gave Anne the map when she forgot it. You guided us through Amphibia, even knew the dangers along the way. You saved Sprig from falling when I couldn't. You knew what to expect, and that's why we're putting out faith in you."

Anne smiled, dropped the helmet, and got herself eaten by the snake. Darrel jumps onto Clipper's back and rides him alongside Tint. "What the heck, you two!?" Sasha cried. She takes the helmet and pries open the snake's mouth. She finds the group not yet digested.

"Frogs of the resistance," she announced. "Execute Maneuver Three!" Darrel watches from above and sees the snake's throat expand in size. The snake then coughs up the frogs and Darrel and Tint jump down to safety.

"Well done Sasha," said Darrel. "We're not done yet," said Sasha. "Wally, Croaker, Loggle, mirror punch!" The three frogs nod and get into position. "Tint, get that dragonfly's attention. We need to make it land." Tint saluted, "You got it, Sash!"

Tint creates a ball of flame and makes it change colors. Clipper's dragonfly instincts make the beast mesmerized by the flames that he lands close to the group. Loggle flings Croaker and Wally at the snake, smashing the collar around its neck.

Then, Loggle jumps onto Clipper's back and slams his two strong fists on his collar. The collar breaks off, and Clipper starts shaking violently. Loggle jumps off, and the group watches the snake crawl away. Darrel was upset to see Clipper was still shaking violently. He couldn't give up on his old friend. So he slowly approached the unstable creature.

"What is he doing?" Sasha asked. Tint just smiled silently. Darrel made direct contact in Clipper's eyes, seeing him losing his glowing purple features. "Clipper," said Darrel in a calm voice. "It's me, bud. Remember me?" He puts his staff down slowly, then gets back up to his face. "It's me, I'm right here bud." Clipper slows down his shaking and starts to see a blurry figure in front of him. But the blur started to fade as Darrel got closer. "Come back to me."

"This isn't your fault, bud." Clipper stops shaking, leaving him to only twitch his eyes. "They made you do this." The group was amazed at what they were witnessing. Sasha was still confused, for she hasn't seen anything like this before. "You'd never hurt anyone," said Darrel. He reaches out to his companion with his hand, like he did when they first met. "You'd never hurt me."

Darrel touches Clipper's head, and his eyes go from slight purple to mostly yellow. "How is he doing this?" Sasha asked. "Please, you are my best friend, bud," said Darrel. The two locked eyes, and Darrel's started to tear up. "My best friend."

Clipper shakes his head one last time, and his eyes return to normal. He looks down at Darrel and clips with happiness. Darrel smiled with joy and relief, "Atta boy! That's it! I'm here!" The two celebrate their reunion with a hug, and the group celebrates.

"What's the plan now?" Ms Croaker asked, looking at Anne. "Now," said Darrel. "We destroy the factory. What do we do Commander Sash?" Sasha smiled, "Loggle, you're on bridge duty." Loggle saluted. "Croaker, Tint, Wally, you're lookouts. Anne, Darrel, Plantars, you know what to do with these."

Sasha gives them a handful of Boom-shrooms and Clipper clicks his mouth again. Darrel smiles, knowing what his friend wants. "Alright, buddy," said Darrel. "Let's do this for old times sake." Darrel jumped on Clipper's back and the two took to the skies.

"Alright, let's mess this place up," said Sasha. The group places the boom-shrooms all over the factory. Darrel drops them from the sky, while Loggle finishes making a bridge for the group. They all take cover in the wilderness just as the factory explodes.

The group get to a fair distance from the factory and catch their breath. Clipper lands close to Darrel and the group. "It's great to see you again buddy," said Darrel. "Darrel, who is that?" Sasha asked. "Sasha, meet my old dragonfly, Clipper." Clipper clips his teeth together, making Sasha smile.

"Guess this means you're free to go, buddy," said Darrel. However, Clipper didn't turn away. He nuzzled in Darrel's face again. "Clipper, what's up with you?" he asked. "I think he's saying he wants to come with us," said Cronaxx. "It's not safe for him out here, and he clearly knows wherever we are, he'll watch over us."

Darrel smiled, "You really want to come with us Clipper?" Clipper clips his teeth loudly with happiness and kneels down in respect. "I'm so happy we're together again," said Darrel hugging his old dragonfly. Ms Croaker, Loggle, and Wally wept in happiness.

As the group head back to headquarters, Sasha tries one last time to give the role to Anne. "Come on, you guys. Take the helmet back." "No way," said Anne. "You're clearly the better commander." "I have to agree on this as well," said Darrel. "I'm more of a follower and I'm a wizard."

"After everything I did to you two, I don't deserve it," said Sasha. "Sasha," said Anne. "Not too long ago, you would've fought to keep the helmet. The fact you don't want it now, proves you've changed." "She's right," said Darrel. "It takes a really good friend to defeat their worst enemies. And the two of us made a great impact on your life."

Sasha smiled, "You really think so?" Darrel shook his head, "I don't think. I know." Anne takes her hand and raises it up. "All in favor of Sasha Waybright as your new leader!" Croaker, Wally, and Loggle immediately said yes, begging her to come back. "Don't worry," said Darrel. "You're still going to need a second-in-command. Me."

Sasha takes the helmet and places it back on her head. "Are you okay with that, Anne?" she asked. "Of course." Anne replied. "Listen you two," said Sasha. "Even though I'm calling the shots, I want you to know this is a partnership." She offers a handshake to the two, but the two hug it out. And for the first time in a long time, Sasha felt true happiness and her old bossy self was no more.

"Looks like this is our new life now guys," said Anne. "It sure is," said Darrel. "Back in ol' Amphibia, Clipper back at our side, and now working with Sasha and the frogs of Wartwood. How can this adventure be any better?"

Hop pop just groaned, "House guest to resistance grunt is a harsh transition." "Yep," said Polly. "You can say that again," said Sprig. Then, Hop pop looks down to see that Anne has lost her shoe, again. "Did you lose a shoe?" he asked. Darrel and Anne look down to see he's right. "Oh, you gotta be kidding me!" Anne cried. "You seem to have a habit of losing shoes around here," said Darrel.

The group makes it back to the hideout, then Clipper calls out in the air. Darrel was worried, "What are you doing bud?" he asked. "We need to keep a low profile." Then, the group watched as multiple dragonflies came out of the treeline and made their way into the hideout. All the dragonflies look just like Clipper.

Darrel smiled, "You're a dad!" He takes out his hand and one of Clipper's children lands on it. Darrel gently strokes his thorax, then lets him fly with his brothers and sisters. "I hope you don't mind dragonflies in our base," said Darrel. "As long as they don't cause any trouble," said Sasha. "I'll have to tell them all I know about dragonflies then," said Darrel.

After a couple days in the Resistance hideout, Clipper's family has settled in with ease. Thanks to Darrel's information, they took the time to care for the dragonflies and feed them whatever they eat.

In his cave, Darrel looks at his photo of his family, and smiles. Then, Sasha enters his cave. "You did a good job with the dragonflies," she said. "Some of them are growing up like their father." "I wish I got a chance to see his mate though," said Darrel. "Oh yeah, where is she?" Sasha asked. "She's gone," said Darrel. "Most dragonflies live for only a month after giving birth to their children." "Oh yeah," said Sash. "I'm not that good with insect behavior."

"You know, I'm glad we're on the same side Sasha," said Darrel. "Yeah, me too." She takes out the old photo of her and Darrel when they were still together and shows it to him. "You kept it all this time?" he asked. Sasha nodded, "I did, because you, Anne, and Marcy mean so much to me."

She looks up to Darrel's eyes and frowns, "I'm really sorry for the way I treated you. You deserve better than me." Darrel takes her hands, then says, "I've already forgiven you." The two hug it out. "You take care of Anne, okay?" Sasha asked. "She's my friend too." Darrel smiled, "Of course I will. And who knows, with your new attitude, maybe you'll find someone else who'll appreciate you as much as I did." Sasha leaves Darrel's cave, leaving him feeling happy that he and Sasha finally have closure.

The next day, everyone was taking it easy until their next move. Frogs received grub from Stumpy's new location, getting new haircuts from Fern, even counting worthless coins that have no value.

In the base, they also have an underground park to relax and unwind. Tint, Polly, and Maddie ran together to catch up on lost time. Clipper was leading his children across the park to find a place to rest up. And Sprig, was spending every moment he could with his girlfriend, Ivy. The two walk down the park, holding hands. Then, a moth swoops down and lands on top of the stalactites.

"Ooh, a corpse maker moth," said Sprig. "You're supposed to kiss when you see one otherwise your crops will be cursed for seven years." He kisses Ivy on the cheek, making her smile. "Just to be safe," he finished. "Crops are very important," said Ivy.

Then, the corpse maker moth comes sweeping down on the two frogs, getting in Ivy's face. Ivy punches the moth, then Sprig hits it with his slingshot. Clipper takes notice, then calls to his children indicating he found a meal. His children cling onto the moth, causing it to fall from the sky and slam to the ground

The impact makes a pink heart shaped cloud in front of the two love frogs. "Woah, nice shot," said Ivy. The two stare with love in their eyes, until they hear a bell ringing.

"Sounds like the mission briefing bell," said Sprig. "Come on!" Ivy cried. She runs past Sprig, holds his hand and races to the briefing hall. They make it only to find that most of the hall has taken up seats they could sit in together. Ivy was a tad upset.

"Attention, fellow freedom fighters," announced Sprig. "Will someone give up their seat for Sprivy, Wartwoods cutest couple?" The two give off a cute pose, annoying the frogs. "Not this again." "Young love is the worst." Since there were no takes, the two frogs decided to stand together.

Not long after that, Sasha, Darrel, Anne, and Grime appear in the center. "Good morning everyone," said Sasha. "Is it morning, Darrel? It's hard to tell underground." "I don't think it matters," replied Darrel.

"Anyway," said Sasha. "We've got good news and bad news." Grime steps up to tell the good news. "Good news is, we've secured a major shipment of crucial supplies from a wealthy pro-Wartwood elite." The group cheered for the news.

"But the bad news is," said Anne. "The only way to Wartwood is through the mountain pass. And Andrias has it locked down,

guarded by a giant laser cannon." The group groans and jeers in response to the cannon.

"Why does Grime always get to do the good news?" Anne asked. "He's had a track record of failure," said Darrel. "Just let him have it." "Show them the cannon, Darrel," said Sasha. Darrel takes his staff, and projects the location to where the cannon is.

"The cannon is protected by a force field," began Sasha. "If we can take that out, we can destroy the weapon. There's a robot battalion protecting both structures, but every hour there's a five minute window where the robots change shifts. That's our chance to strike."

"Wait, the robots change shifts?" Loggle asked. "Every robot counts for Andrias' army," said Darrel. "He would want every robot maintained and ready to invade our worlds." "He's right," said Ms Croaker. "Everyone deserves a break."

Darrel stops the illusion and the group regains their attention to the humans. "We'll only need two teams of two for this mission," said Darrel. "One team takes out the generator, and the other takes the cannon before the five minutes are up. Sprig, Ivy, Stumpy, and Fern, follow Sasha to receive your assignments." "Move out," said Sasha leaving the briefing room.

"Looks like our number's up," said Stumpy. "Of course they want the two of us," said Sprig holding Ivy's hand. "Yeah," said Ivy. "After all, we're perfectly in sync." The team leaves the room, leaving the rest wondering what's next.

"Alright, so that's the only mission for today," said Anne. "So what do you guys wanna do?" "Can we have a piñata party?" Wally asked. Grime looks at Anne and Darrel with a surprised look, then he says, "Don't see why not." The frogs cheer and bring down an Andrias sized piñata. Tint glared, with his stick in hand, and said, "Long live the king." He burns his stick and takes a powerful swing to the stomach. The candy pours out, making the frogs cheer.

After the piñata celebration, Darrel rushes into the stables where Sasha is prepping for the mission. The stables were filled with all kinds of snails. Some dragonflies as well. "Are you all set?" he asked. "Yep," replied Sasha. "Just need to assign the teams."

Stumpy, Fern, Ivy, and Sprig arrive to receive their assignments. "Okay, you're here," said Darrel. "Now I've run the numbers, studied all your strengths and weaknesses, and as long as you stick to the plan, we won't fail." "Okay," said Sasha. "So the teams are Sprig with Stumpy, and Ivy with Fern."

Sprig and Ivy were shocked at the assigned teams. "Uhh, guys," said Sprig. "Shouldn't me and Ivy be partners?" "He means because we're dating," said Ivy. Sasha sighed, "Listen twerp and twerpette, you're not here to pass notes and play footsie. You're here to do a job. These pairings are super important to the mission."

"But what about Anne and Darrel?" Sprig asked. "They always stay together." "We may be together Sprig," said Darrel. "But Sasha has something else planned for me. And Anne has other stuff she has to do. We're acting as an army, not a group in high school. So deal with being apart for the five minutes we have for this mission, or we can kiss Wartwood goodbye. Got it? Good."

Darrel didn't even give Sprig a chance to answer. This was an order, not a suggestion. "I'll miss you Ivy," said Sprig in tears. "What will I do without you?" "I'll miss you every second!" Ivy cried. "Good lord," groaned Sasha.

"All packed up," said Stumpy. "We're good to go," said Fern. "Okay," said Sasha. "I'll bring them to the laser cannon. Darrel, report to the training grounds. Captain Grime will be waiting for you there with Tint." Darrel nodded and saluted to his commander. The group leaves the hideout and Darrel races off to the training grounds.

When he got there, he was impressed with how big the place was. The arena has a large stash of weapons, a set of various tricks and

traps, and numerous test dummies either stabbed, slashed, or pierced.

"Ahh, Darrel," said Grime. "Glad you could make it." He approaches the human with Tint following behind him. "Captain," saluted Darrel. "Sasha sent me here." "Yes, I know," said Grime. "Because she wants you to start training in hand to hand combat."

"Now I understand you guys are wizards, and you have magic on your side. But there comes a time when magic isn't going to help you on the battlefield." "He's right," said Tint. "Those robots we've faced are still impervious to magic, thanks to my grandfather."

"That's why Sasha and I have decided you and Tint should train using other weapons," said Grime. Darrel looks to his hands, and realizes that Grime is right. Magic alone, can't be the answer to everything. "Okay, let's begin."

"Now before we begin, were there any other weapons you have used before?" Grime asked. Darrel and Tint took some time to think. It took a while, but after remembering their experience with Tritonio, they've decided what weapons to use. Darrel grabbed his pair of gauntlets with hidden blades from his backpack, and Tint grabbed a sword that's just the right size for him.

"Before we go any further, Tint," said Grime. "I have something I thought you should have." He takes out a small sock hat and hands it over to Tint. Tint froze for a moment, for he knew whose hat it was.

"Where did you get my uncle's hat?" Tint asked. "After Cronaxx was slain," began Grime. "His body disappeared, leaving behind his cloak and hat. When we made our escape, his hat blew into the air and caught me on my leg. I almost tripped because of it, but somewhere in my mind told me to keep it until then. Now that you're back, I thought you could have it as motivation to stop Andrias."

Tint smiled and put on his Uncle's hat. It was a perfect fit. "Thanks, Captain Grime," said Tint. "I really appreciate it." Darrel smiled, then

looked at his photo of his family. "Let's get started," he said.

Meanwhile, Sprig and Ivy were still uneasy with the teams they were assigned with. "There's got to be a way to switch," said Sprig. "As long as Sasha doesn't find out."

The group reach the destination, and find the laser cannon being guarded by the robots. "Alright," said Sasha. "There's our target, and our supplier is just on the other side of that pass." She takes out a couple flags. "I'll keep watch up here and signal him when the cannon is down." Then she gives the signal like she's at a cheerleading rally. "Sorry. Cheerleading muscle memory."

She gives the two teams each a watch. "The shift change is about to start. Follow my plan exactly, and it should just be enough. Okay team, move out." The team salutes in response and make their way to the laser cannon and shield generator. Sasha watches a mail frog come down the pass, only to be blasted by the cannon. "Eesh," she said.

Back in the training grounds, Darrel and Grime stand toe-to-toe, practicing battle stances and lunges with the weapons they have. Suddenly, Darrel gets a chill up his spine. "Darrel?" Tint asked. "Did you feel that too?" Darrel nodded, "Yeah, something's wrong."

"What is it?" Grime asked. "Only one way to find out," said Darrel. He waves his hands in a circle and shows the toad and salamander what's going on. He watches Sprig and Ivy write something on a piece of paper and shows it to Stumpy and Fern.

"Dear nerds, I Sasha, order you to switch partners. Sprig should be with Ivy since they're dating," said Stumpy. Fern was concerned, but said, "Well it certainly sounds legit." "Well let's switch it up then, Sasha's a tactical wizard," said Stumpy.

Darrel stopped the vision and clenched his fists. "Dang it," he said. "They couldn't last five minutes being apart?" "This is going to go so poorly," said Grime. "We've got to do something," said Tint. "All we

can do is get prepared," said Grime. "Let's put your fighting skills to the test." Darrel and Tint nod in approval.

With Sprig partnering with Ivy, everything seemed to be going so well for them. However, when they got to the laser cannon, things went terribly wrong. Their mixup scheme caused Stumpy and Fern to get caught by the shield generator. The generator happens to be a robot built-in power station, with crab like features.

Sprig and Ivy jump in to rescue them, only to get ambushed. Ivy and Sprig immediately switched the team's back, just in time before the shift change was up. The laser cannon was destroyed, and Sasha gave the signal to the supply wagon.

Sasha regroups with the team, with a scouring look on her face. "You should consider yourselves lucky," she said. "Sprig, Ivy, you nearly cost us the supply aid." "Wait, how did you know that?" Sprig asked. Then, they see Darrel appear as a holographic illusion. "I told her everything," he replied. "I felt your treachery during my training."

"I separated you two because I needed two of our best commandos protecting two of our best specialists so they could do their jobs," said Sasha. Sprig and Ivy come to an understanding, and agree they made a terrible mistake. "But you still managed to pull off the mission. So I'm only *sort of furious* !"

"Well I'm glad y'all learned your lessons," said Stumpy. "Well, they could get back on Sasha's good terms," said Darrel. "We can?" Sprig asked. "Yep, I need two of our best commandos back in the training arena for basic training," said Darrel. "I've been working on my techniques and I'm itching to spar with more frogs."

Sprig and Ivy grinned, "Yes sir!" They saluted and Darrel's illusion vanished. Then, the supply wagon comes out from the passage and on the path to Wartwood. And the caravan driver is Wigbert, Wally's father. "Cheerio, my good frogs," he said. "The Ribberton estate is here to pledge its full support for your rebellion."

"Thanks Wigbert," said Sasha. "Your supplies are really going to make a difference." The group gets back in the wagon and follows Wigbert to the base. "Uhh, guys," said Ivy. "Does this guy look like Wally to anyone?"

Seek and Ye Shall Find

Chapter 62 - Seek and Ye Shall Find

The Wartwood Resistance continued to battle against the tyrant king. They did small jobs like destroying factories, and ambushing robot squads. Anne and Darrel kept up by providing their teamwork combat skills. Sasha felt things were going much smoother with her being in charge. Sprig, Tint, Polly, and Hop pop also did their part, even if they weren't always on the battlefield.

One day, only a small group of fighters was in the assembly meeting. The group consists of Croaker, Wally, Loggle, Maddie, Tint, and Toadie. While Toadie was still looking clean and cute, the rest were dirty and tough. Sasha, Anne, and Darrel come forward with their next assignment. And this time, this was different from their normal missions.

"Listen up soldiers," said Sasha. "The Marauders have intercepted our latest shipment of weapons." The group was disappointed and angry, considering that they've had problems with them before. Darrel and Anne were confused, since they weren't around.

"Okay, Sash," said Darrel. "Bring us up to speed on this. Who or what are the Mauraders?" Sasha points to the chalkboard, illustrating a punk amphibian with stink lines all over him. "A gang of dirty anarchist frogs who don't work for Andrias or the Rebellion"

"So, we're dealing with pirates?" Anne asked. "Indeed," said Sasha. "They hijack caravans, raid villages for scraps, and basically a huge unwashed thorn in my side." "These Marauders have to follow a leader of some kind," said Darrel. "These rats often travel in packs. And where there's packs, there's someone in charge."

"Can't we just smack them down?" Anne asked. "There are too many of them to take head on," replied Maddie. "Bingo," said Sasha. She

turns to flip the chalkboard to the other side. "Fair enough," said Darrel. "So, what's the plan?"

The chalkboard shows the group an illustrated Marauder camp. "So, we're going to sneak into their camp, and steal our stuff back." The group cheered in response, but Toadie felt uneasy about the task. "Croaker, you and your team come up with a battle strategy," said Sasha. "Darrel, Anne, we're going to grab the gear." Croaker salutes to Sasha, and Darrel salutes as he follows the two girls.

"Alright you miserable layabouts," said Croaker. "Listen up!" The group nodded unanimously at their team captain, until Toadie stepped in. "Hey, before we start, does anyone want a post-it note? Can't have a good meeting without post-it notes." Croaker takes the post-its, feeling annoyed at his soft generosity.

"Okay, here's the plan," said Croaker. "Loggle and Maddie, you're with me. Wally, Tint, and Toadie, you're on offense. Keep the pressure on them until Anne, Sasha, and Darrel are out with the goods. Now gear up, we leave in three!"

"Um, Ms Croaker?" Croaker stops at the sound of Toadie's voice. Knowing what he was going to say, she didn't say a word. "As much as I like to be on offense with Wally and Tint, I'd be much more comfortable as the-" "Lookout? Again?" Croaker finished.

Tint leans into Maddie and whispers, "Does this always happen with this guy?" "All the time," whispered Maddie. "He's just too soft." "Excuse me," said Croaker. "Have something you two want to say?" "Actually, yes," said Maddie. "I was just explaining to Tint that all Toadie ever wants to do is organize meetings and be on the lookout."

"But it's what I'm good at," said Toadie. "Direct physical confrontation, not so much." As he swings a few punches, he bumps into Maddie and makes her drop her pouch of magic dust, causing her to disappear. Tint was as surprised as Toadie he grabbed him

and shook him violently. "You Idiot!" Tint shouted. "You could've hurt Maddie!"

"What do you mean?" Toadie asked. "I just did." "You wish." The two turn to see Maddie on the other side, unscathed. "Sup?" Her surprise caused Toadie to cling onto Ms Croaker. "Listen Toadie, the world's changed and we had to change with it."

Toadie watches to see Loggle do push ups with one arm, Wally carving wooden ducks, some with two faced edges, and Tint conjuring up ghost blades. Tint looks over to Maddie, who unsheathes a set of blades from her gauntlet. Tint comes to her and says, "Let me give you a spark of improvement." He snaps his fingers and gives her blades a glowing burning ember feature.

"Wow," Maddie blushed in amazement. "Thanks, Tint." "Anytime, Maddie," he replied. He touches her gauntlet without touching the blades. "Anytime." "Don't you want to step out of your comfort zone?" Croaker asked Toadie. "Become something more than the vest-wearing, pencil-pusher you've always been?"

"My comfort zone is so comfy," replied Toadie. "Well I think you're capable of so much more," said Croaker. "Make that two," said Tint. "Toadie, my Uncle once said that our dreams can come true if we have the courage to pursue them. If you have dreams, then Andrias and the Marauders are taking them away from you. Do you want that?"

Toadie takes his words of wisdom and tries to step out of his comfort zone, only to go back in. Maddie smiles at Tint, "That was amazing, Tint. You know, if it were up to me, you'd be a great wizard already." Tint blushed, "Thanks Maddie. You know, I'm glad we're working together on this. I was hoping we could make up for lost time." Maddie smiled, "Me too, Tint. I'd like to show you what I've been working on."

"Come on, team," said Croaker. "We've got work to do!" Tint and Maddie fist bump and the group march out the base. Toadie cradles

in his comfort zone, only to be picked up by Loggle. Along the way, Tint looked on with ambition. He glances over to Maddie for a moment then looks away. He felt a strange feeling he never thought he would never feel. He wasn't sure what that feeling was. All he knew was that it was warm and happy.

The group made it to the Marauder camp later that day. Sasha led them through the front door, and took cover behind a couple crates. Sasha gives them the signal to advance, and they acknowledge. But as they advance, the group looks around the camp grounds. No guards, no lookouts, no anyone. It looked deserted.

"It's quiet," said Sasha. "Too quiet." "Don't let your guard down," said Darrel. "They could jump us at any moment." "Who cares," said Loggle. "Let's get our stuff and go." He points to the tent with the signs that point to where their supplies are.

The group goes over to the tent, until Tint gets a chilling sensation from his spine. "Wait!" Tint cried. But it was too late. The Marauders jump out and surround the group. "It's a trap!" Tint shouted. "Head for the rendezvous!" Sasha called. The group attempt to escape, only for Sasha, Anne, and Darrel to exit the front gates.

The trio make it to the tree line, just a mile from the camp. "That was too close," said Anne. "Uh, Anne," said Darrel. "Where is Tint and the others!?" The two look around to see that they were the only ones out of the camp. Sasha gets her binoculars out and finds the group still inside the camp.

Darrel takes the binoculars and finds his best friend with the rest of the group. "Tint's captured," he said. "Along with the others." "We have to get back down there," said Anne.

"Absolutely not," said Sasha. "What, why not?" Anne asked. "We might just get captured ourselves," replied Sasha. "And the resistance can't lose their leaders." Darrel looks down to the camp, seeing Tint being escorted in the camp's cage. "So what do we do?" Darrel asked. "We just wait," replied Sasha. "Croaker's team is pretty

tough. And with Tint by their side, I'm positive they'll make it out." Darrel was still uneasy about the situation

"Listen Darrel, you've been by Tint's side the whole time. And I'm sure he's grown more powerful and wiser like the wizard he was destined to be. Now you have to trust that he'll take care of himself in this situation." Sasha touches his shoulder in hopes of reassuring the human wizard. He looked back down at the camp, until Cronaxx appeared and nodded at Sasha's statement. Darrel sadly smiled, and turned back to Sasha.

"Okay," he said. "I trust him." "Are you sure?" Anne asked. Darrel takes her hand. "I know Tint," he replied. "I trust him. Do you trust me?" Anne nodded silently in response.

"So, what do we do until then?" Anne asked Sasha. Sasha stands up and draws her swords. "We'll train," she replied. "What do you say, Darrel? You're up to go against me first?" Darrel lets go of Anne's hands and draws his hidden blades from his wrists. "Let's dance," he replied. "I've got some fire in me."

Both the dual wielding fighters stood a fair distance from each other. Darrel drew his hidden blades and charged at Sasha. Darrel lunges at her, but Sasha dodges his attack. She swings her swords, giving Darrel the chance to block them. Darrel pushed Sasha back, giving them leg room to lunge. Sasha points her sword at Darrel's face, only for him to catch the sword with his blades.

Darrel brings her sword down and pulls off a low sweep kick, knocking Sasha off her feet. Sasha reacts fast and flips backwards, getting back in her battle stance. "Still have a lot to learn," she said. Darrel grinned, "It would seem so." He retracts his blades and lets Anne step in. "Your turn," he said. Anne gets ready to fight against Sasha.

Down at the camp, Tint and the rest were locked up in the camp's cage. They encounter their leader, who happens to be Barry. "Barry,

you run the Marauders?" Tint asked. "That's right I do," he replied. "Turns out I got a sweet tooth for anarchy."

"What are you going to do to us you sicko?" Wally asked. "We're going to sell you sugarplums to Andrias' army," replied Barry. "They pay extra for resistance frogs." The group gasped, except for Tint. "You really think Andrias is going to let you guys go while you're doing this?"

"Look around," said Barry. "The whole world is against one another. But that suits us, doesn't it Brian?" "I used to be a tax accountant," said Brian. "Now I drink the blood of my enemies and eat dessert for breakfast."

"See, turns out the end of the world is sweet," said Barry. "No one can trust Andrias anymore," said Tint. "The moment he gets what he wants, he's going to stab you in the back. Literally!" "I'm not afraid," mocked Barry. The Marauders laugh and leave the group.

"Then I'll show you true fear," said Tint. He gets in stance and conjures up a couple of glowing dark purple orbs. Then, he fires them at Toadie. "Here's your self confidence," said Tint. "I've given you this gift, the rest is up to you."

Toadie looks down at his glowing arms, and starts to get a glimpse of what might happen if he continues being soft. The Marauders would break his spirit, then his friends would be taken away. All because he wouldn't get out of his comfort zone. Then, he hears a couple voices in his head. "I think you're capable of so much more," said Croaker's voice. "Dreams come true if we have the strength to pursue them," said Tint's voice.

Toadie clenches his fists and attacks the guard at the front. The group was amazed by this enchantment. "He's possessed," said Maddie. "You're amazing, Tint." But Tint said nothing, he just focused on his channeling. "Forget organization," said Toadie. "I've got an idea how to get out of here." "Let's hear it," said Croaker.

"Loggle, let's use those muscles to dig us out of this cage," said Toadie. "Maddie, navigate us to the stolen weapons. Wally, when we get there use Boom Shrooms to cause a distraction so we can get away. Croaker, you and I will make sure this all goes according to plan. And Tint, keep up with the channeling, I love this confidence boost. Got it?"

"Yes, sir!" said the group. They follow Toadie's plan accordingly. They dig underground with Loggle's new muscles. Maddie uses a spell on an underground spider to guide them from above to the stolen weapons cache. Wally gathers some boom shrooms for the diversion. Croaker smiles at Toadie's newly developed confidence.

Back outside the camp, Anne was practicing her combat skills with Sasha. "Look Anne," said Sasha. "I'm telling you we just have to wait." "Wait?" Anne asked. "My friends are in trouble, and here we are sparring." The two clash swords, and then Darrel feels a chill down his spine. He looks at the camp and smiles.

"Sasha," said Darrel. "I got this strange feeling that Tint is doing just fine with the others." "Really?" Sasha asked. Darrel nods, "It's only a matter of time before we see something from here." He looks back at the camp. "Tint and I are like the brothers we never had, and I can't imagine what it would be like without him." Suddenly, they see an explosion at the camp. "What was that?" Anne asked. "Things are going accordingly," replied Darrel. "Come on, it's go-time," said Sasha.

The three breach the front gates and find the Marauders being chased by Tint and the others. Barry gets cornered by Maddie and Tint with a frightening look on his face. "Take a good long look, Barry," said Tint. His eyes glow dark red, causing Barry to tremble profusely. "As of now, I'm your worst nightmare."

Maddie chuckles in a dark tone and throws a sack of her magic dust at him. Turning him into a giant chicken like before. "Oh no," cried Barry. "Not again." Then, Tint throws a vial containing a strong scent at Barry. "What is that smell?" Barry asked. "The smell, and taste of

betrayal," replied Tint. As he gets on the wagon, he turns back to Barry and grins, "You'll understand soon enough."

The group leaves with the recovered weapons and Wally uses the boom shrooms to destroy their camp. "Great work out there Toadie," said Sasha. "Savage stuff. "Yeah," said Darrel. "Especially with what you did with that toad that was ten times your height. Where did you learn those moves?"

"It's actually how I dress the mayor every morning," said Toadie. "Anyway, it was all thanks to Tint. His enchantment was the key to give me the courage I needed to get out of my comfort zone." Tint grinned, "I didn't enchant you." Toadie was surprised. "Yeah," said Tint. "All I did was show you what could've happened if you wouldn't step out of your comfort zone and sit behind the front lines. All that courage and tactical stuff you did, that was all you buddy."

Toadie looks at his hands, and smiles. "It is," he gleefully said. "Whoopie!" "I always knew you had it in you," said Croaker. "Not me," said Maddie. "I'm still in shock," said Wally. "But that was nice of you for what you did Tint," said Maddie. "What kind of spell did you cast to make that happen?"

Tint smiled, "It was in a book about basic oracle spells. Chapter twenty, the future of possibilities." Maddie sat next to him with an excited grin on her face. "Tell me more." Anne and Darrel look over and smile. "You thinking what I'm thinking, Anne?" Darrel asked. "Way ahead of you," replied Anne. "I'm already coming up with Tint and Maddie pairing names. How about Taddie? No, Madint? Or maybe..."

"Mint?" Sasha asked. Darrel smiled, "Perfect. But let's not get our hopes up. This has to be dealt with at their own pace." The girls nodded in agreement. "Hey Sash," said Darrel. "Thanks for reminding me about what Tint's capable of without me." "You're welcome," said Sasha. "And believe me, I do care about these frogs, toads, and salamanders. A lot, that we've been through some serious stuff together since you and Anne have been gone. But being in

charge means making tough calls. And, sometimes you have to stop and remember to have faith in the people around you."

Darrel and Anne smiled silently until Darrel spoke up. "Now where could you have learned such a heartwarming lesson like that? Is it from your best friends, who never want to abandon you? Even when they're miles away?" "Still, thanks Sasha," said Anne.

Back at the destroyed camp, what's left of the Marauders got back on their feet. "They took all our stuff. Even our food!" "This couldn't possibly get any worse," said Barry. "What are we going to eat now?"

Soon, that powerful aroma that Tint splashed on him drove the group insanely hungry. That powerful aroma was a batch of fried chicken oil, fresh from Earth. They got their knives and forks ready to prepare a batch of chicken for dinner. "Holy BAKAAAAAW!" Barry cried.

The next day, Sasha gathers everyone in the planning room. "Alright team," she said. "We've been on a roll lately. Destroying factories, saving wildlife, taking down Marauders." The group applauded, except for Darrel. "That's the good news," he said. "The bad news is that it's not grabbing Andrias' attention. Every plan we've made barely made a dent in Andrias' master plan."

"And if we don't act fast," said Sasha. "He'll be ready to invade other worlds soon. So Darrel's come up with an idea on what our next major step should be." Everyone turns their attention to Darrel. He holds out his phone and inserts it into Frobo's mouth.

"When we returned to Earth," began Darrel. "Me, Anne, and the others found an ancient vase with Amphibia writing on the side of it." Frobo projects the photo of the vase with the Amphibian writing.

"Let's see," said Croaker. "It says, 'Seek the Mother of Olms, she will guide you to your destiny.'" "Cryptic," said Sasha. "What does it mean?" "We don't know," replied Hop pop. "We found this on Earth, so it must be important."

"I'm sure if we find Mother Olm, she'll have all the answers," said Anne. "All of this isn't much to go on," scoffed Grime. "Plus, no one's seen an Olm for decades." "Me, Sprig, and Polly have," said Tint. Sprig and Polly jump out behind Grime, scaring him. "He's right," they said.

"Their names are Lysil and Angwin," said Polly. "The Olms that almost ate us in Quallerer's Pass." "Anyone know any friendlier, less murderous Olms?" Sasha asked. The rest of the gang shrugged in response. "Murderous Olms it is," said Sasha.

Later, Joe and Clipper take the group to Quallerer's Pass. Along the way, they find a large drill machine, getting ready to dig for resources. "Go low Joe," said Sasha. "Same here, Clipper," said Darrel. The two flying companions land the group by a cave and stay out of sight from the robots.

Sasha, Anne, Darrel, Tint, and the Plantars all enter the cave. Wondering how to get the Olms out of hiding, Sprig and Polly come up with an idea. Polly pinches Sprig, causing the siblings to whine and complain. Their echoes cover the entire caverns, until a pair of eyes appeared in the darkness.

It was the pair of Olms they encountered on their trip to Newtopia. Lysil and Angwin, the conjoined Olms that patrol the caves. "It's those squabbling frog siblings and their salamander companion," said Lysil. "This time, we're going to actually eat, and your little friends too," said Angwin.

"I'd like to see you try," said Darrel with his staff. "Because I will gladly carve our way out of your stomachs," said Sasha with her blades drawn onto the Olms. "Okay, point taken," said Lysil.

"We just want to talk to you," said Sprig. "Do you guys know the Mother of Olms?" Anne asked. "How do you know about Mother Olm?" Lysil asked. Angwin smacks Lysil in response, "You dumb dumb, now they know we know her!" The two quarrel and bicker until Darrel and Anne broke up the fight.

"Focus, you two," said Anne. "Sorry," said Angwin. "Mother Olm is the oldest, wisest Olm in the world. Keeper of ancient secrets and prophecies." "She lives in our homeland," said Lysil. "The subterranean city of Proteus."

"Can you guide us there?" Darrel asked. "We could, but it would be pointless," said Lysil. "Olms are famously suspicious of outsiders. They'd never let you inside." "Plus, we were sort of banished," said Angwin.

"Why?" Tint asked. "One time, we were on nightwatch," said Lysil. "And we started arguing," said Angwin. "Because we were distracted, a swarm of troglobites snuck past us and nearly destroyed Proteus." "Not our finest moment," said Lysil.

"So they threw you out after one mistake?" Sasha asked. "That's totally not fair! Everyone deserves a second chance." Darrel and Anne smiled at her statement and stood by her side. Then, Darrel spoke up. "Well, right now Amphibia is in danger. And the fate of this world and countless others may rest on us finding the Mother of Olms. Actions have consequences, good or bad. In this case, if you let us see her, you'll have a hand in saving your world. Then, the Olms would give you a second chance. Right?"

Lysil and Angwin looked at each other and said, "No, probably not." "And we don't have anything better to do. So..." Darrel smiles at the Olms for at least trying. They take them down the passage into the entrance of the underground city of Proteus. The city was glowing with magnificent colors, thanks to the underground moss, algae, and mushrooms. "Welcome to Proteus," said Angwin.

They reach the front gates, only to be stopped by the guards on duty. They smelled the group and they were very anxious. "Parisia is not going to like this," said one of the guards. "Who's Parasia?" Tint asked. "She resides over Proteus," said Lysil. "What is Parasia like?" Darrel asked. "You're about to find out," said the guard. "Now move."

The gang delve deeper into the city of Proteus, along the way, they find the inhabitants swimming in waters and hiding in holes.

Suddenly, the ground began to shake. "What's happening?" Hop pop asked. "Mysterious earthquakes have been wreaking havoc on the city for weeks," replied the guard. "Water's being diverted, tunnels have become blocked, sunlight has even seeped in."

"You guys don't tolerate sunlight, right?" Darrel asked. His question was answered when a ray of light hit Angwin on his skin. "I'll take that as a yes," said Darrel.

"Have you gone out to investigate the cause?" Anne asked. "Or asked the surface dwellers for help?" "We can't go above ground, we'll burn alive," said the guards. "Plus, we don't associate your kind if we can help it."

The group soon find themselves in the presence of the one called Parasia. "Indeed, insularity is how we Olms survive. Fewer friends, sure. But also, fewer foes. I am Parasia, what do you want, outsiders?"

"We've come to seek the wisdom of Mother Olm," said Darrel. "Mother Olm? How do you know-?" Parasia asked before smelling the presence of Lylis and Angwin. "You two?! I should've known you were involved! Bringing outsiders here, you will be punished severely."

"Now hold on," said Darrel. "You may not like them just because they made a mistake. But right now, your home is in trouble. All of Amphibia is in trouble. Andrias is destroying this wonderful world, and if we don't stop him."

"That's none of our concern," said Parasia. "It should be your concern, because Andrias won't stop on the surface," said Tint. "He'll take everything to make his plan come true. Including your homes."

The ground begins to shake again, causing the Olms to panic. "It's probably that giant drill we saw," said Anne. "Andrias must be mining

for something." "Got to be iron ore," said Lysil. "Proteus is built on a huge deposit of it." "He must want it to build more war machines," said Sasha.

"A giant drill? War machines?" Parasia asked. She laughs in disbelief, making Darrel angry. "These giant tremors are nothing more than common earthquakes." "But how do you explain the sunlight?" Sprig asked. "ENOUGH!" Parasia shouted. "Guards, dispose of the outsiders."

The guards escort the group and Lysil and Angwin out of the city, leaving everyone distraught. "Hey," said Sasha. "I know what it's like to make a huge mistake you'll regret. I'm still fighting to make up for it. And I hope you won't give up either."

Suddenly, the ground began shaking again. This time, it was more fierce and more dangerous. "Sounds like that drill is getting close," said Darrel. "We have to do something," said Sasha. "To the surface!" Anne cried. "We know a shortcut," said Lysil.

Lysil and Angwin get them topside without getting hit by the sunlight. They race to the problem and find the robot drilling for iron ore. "Alright, team," said Sasha. "Attack plan: Epsilon." "What about us?" Angin asked. "We want to help too."

Darrel looks to the sunlight, knowing that the sun could probably kill them. Then he comes up with an idea. He takes a large piece of rock off the cliff outside and shelters the two Olms. However, it takes a lot of strain on the human wizard. "I can only hold it for so long," said Darrel. "If you want to help, now is your chance."

The Olms smile and follow the group. They ambush the robot squad, while Lysil and Angwin try to slow down the drill. But when they got to the drill, Darrel's rock shelter shattered into pieces. "Guys!" Darrel shouted. "The sunlight! Get out of there!"

"No," said Angwin. "We're doing this." "FOR PROTEUS!" They kept a tight grip on the giant drill, causing it to short circuit and the ground

to start cracking. The group falls back into the city of Proteus. And the Olms investigate the noise outside the gates.

They find Lysil and Angwin in pain from the sun, and Darrel and Tint casts a healing spell for the brave Olms. "Thank you, outsider," said Angwin. "I can't believe you guys would stay, even after your shelter broke," said Darrel. "Proteus will always be our home," said Lysil. "Even if we don't live in it."

Just then, Parasia appears and smells the damages from outside. "Now do you understand?" Tint asked. "This doesn't prove anything," said Parasia. The group was shocked, "WHAT?!" "Are you Kidding ME?!" Darrel shouted. "How do I know you didn't fake this?"

"Lysil and Agnwin nearly died to save you and your city," said Tint. "Look at them!" "Maybe they injured themselves to make it look like they protected us," said Parasia. The Olms talked themselves into believing in Parasia.

This was the last straw for Sasha. She climbed up onto what's left of the drill and took her stand. "You are the biggest moron I have ever met!" she shouted. Everyone, even her friends were surprised at her outburst.

"Excuse me?!" Parasia asked. "Woah, Sasha," said Anne. "I don't think-" Darrel blocks her with her staff and says, "Anne, there's a time to talk, and a time to shut up. Now is the time to be quiet."

Sasha shouted, "Lysil and Angwin bent over backwards to prove they deserve a second chance! But you snooty despot and your crummy town aren't worth it!" She climbs down from the drill and leads the team out of the caverns. "Come on guys. If these idiots want to perish in denial, that's their business. Let's get out of here."

"Actions have consequences." Darrel told Parasia. "And your actions now seal the date of your city, your world, and countless worlds." He points his staff at Parasia and the Olm starts hearing screams of pain and agony.

When Darrel stops the vision, Parasia stops the group from leaving. "You've all got guts," she said. "I know what's been going on topside, but it's better to be safe than sorry. You shall meet Mother Olm."

"What about Lysil and Angwin?" Sasha asked. Parasia groaned, "Fine. they shall be granted access to the city. Under constant supervision."

"They'll take it," said Darrel. The group, Lysil and Angwin, bow in respect. "Now then," said Parasia. "Follow me." Parasia escorts the group all the way to Mother Olm. Darrel, Anne, and Sasha fist bump at the main chamber doors as they close behind them.

Tale as Olm as Time

Chapter 63 - Tale as Olm as Time

Sasha, Anne, Darrel, Tint, and the Plantars continue their journey to find Mother Olm in the underground city of Proteus. Their journey delves deeper underground, slowly and carefully. The hill was so steep that one false move could cause the group to tumble down at a fast pace. Cronaxx however, didn't have to worry considering he's a ghost.

"Mother Olm's chamber is at the end of this tunnel," said one of the guards. "Be careful, especially if you're frail and weak." "It'll be alright," said Cronaxx. "I've been down here before." "You have?" Tint asked. "During my quest to travel to other worlds," replied Cronaxx. "I needed to find the location of the stones."

While Cronaxx was talking, Hop pop was having trouble keeping his joints together and sliding down carefully. "How's it going back there old timer?" asked the guards. "Who are you calling old?" replied Hop pop. As he did, his leg slipped and his joint snapped. He screamed in agony and fell forward. "Oh help me, frog."

Hop pop's fumble caused the group to fall over and start tumbling down the steep hill. Luckily, the group landed in front of the archway to Mother Olm's chambers. "Sorry kids," said Hop pop. "My ding dang knee's been acting up again. Forty years of farming will do that to ya." "Good going," said the guards. "At this rate, you'll get everyone killed." They laughed and laughed, until Darrel decided to magically remove their mouths.

The group gets back up and looks around Mother Olm's chambers. Their mouths hang open at the sight of glowing crystals, glowing flowers, an outer space looking wall in front of them. A couple of stairways to nowhere, and a gong in the center of the room. Sprig and Tint look at the gong with curiosity.

"Wow, what does this do?" Sprig asked. "I think that's the way to summon Mother Olm," replied Tint. Sprig starts banging on the gong repeatedly, causing Hop pop's spine to go out. He knocks the group down again and pushes them closer to the gong. Tint stops Sprig from banging, only for him to swing a power punch to the gong.

The gong's echo reached the depths of the caverns, and something awoke from below. The ground began to shake, causing Hop pop to fall on his knees. Then, another Olm came rushing from below the cliff behind the gong. It was ten times as large as the average olm in Amphibia. It was Mother Olm, an old olm with pale purple colored skin, light blue and green glowing fins and a mark on her forehead.

"Who is it that summons me?" Mother Olm asked. The group was astonished by her presence. "Greetings Mother Olm," said Anne. "I'm Anne Boonchuy, this is Sasha Waybright..." "Hey," said Sasha. "This is Darrel Loyallitat," said Anne. "Hello there," said Darrel. "And Tint, Cronaxx, and the Plantars," said Anne. The Plantars, Tint, and Cronaxx waved hello.

"Cronaxx?" Mother Olm asked. "I haven't seen you in so long." "Wait, you've met with Mother Olm, Uncle?" Tint asked. "I did," replied Cronaxx. "During my ambitions to explore new worlds, I went to her to find the locations of the stones." "And because he trusted the wrong person, his dream cost him his life," said Mother Olm. "Because his heart was pure, I believed he wanted to explore new worlds. So I gave him the locations of the stones."

"And now, he returns with frogs. There hasn't been one in a thousand years. And as for you three. How exotic." Mother Olm's fins reach the humans and touch them. Sasha was uncomfortable, but Darrel and Anne weren't affected.

"We need your help," said Anne. "Because Cronaxx trusted the wrong person," began Darrel. "King Andrias is about to destroy Amphibia, and-" "Wait," said Mother Olm. "Hold on, do you hear a flapping sound, like a million tiny little wings? No? Just me? Must be in my head. Continue."

"Anyway," said Darrel. "Me, Anne, Sasha, and our other friend Marcy got sent here by the music box." "Music box?" Mother Olm asked. She gets into a dominant position. "I am the keeper of the prophecy, and the stones," she announced. "Upon which the fate of all worlds rests."

The guards start to pound their drums to the rhythm of the dramatic effect. "And that prophecy is..." The group waits for the answer. The prophecy that could save their friend, their home, and countless others. The tension builds up in Darrel, Anne, and Sasha, until....

"Wait, how'd it go again?" Mother Olm asked. "Hold on, it'll come back to me." Then her fins started glowing light purple. "Okay, here we go." The guards bang on the drums again. The group huddles together. Until, "The Prophecy is..."

"Gone. It's gone." "WHAT?!" the group gasped. "Gone! What do you mean gone?" Tint asked. "Listen kids," said Mother Olm. "When you get to a certain age, things like your memory and body just stop working and abandon you like bad friends."

"Tell me about it," said Hop pop. "Darrel," said Anne. "Do you think there's a certain memory charm that can help her remember it?" "I don't think there is," replied Darrel. "Most of those charms are used to erase specific memories." "He's right," said Cronaxx. "Take it from me."

"Is there anything we can do?" Sprig asked. "Perhaps, there is one chance," said Mother Olm. "What is it?" Tint asked. Mother Olm pulls out her tail showing a batch of what looks like cream. "Dr Yohann's incredible brain cream. Dr Yohann himself used to apply it, but he went missing some years back. And ever since then, I've had memory problems and intense migraines."

"Okay, so we rub this gunk on your forehead?" Anne asked. "Not her forehead," said Cronaxx. "You mean..." said Darrel. "It only works if you put it directly on my brain," said Mother Olm. She places her

head next to the stairs and opens access to her brain through her eardrum.

"We're going inside your head?" Sprig asked. "Cool." "Uhh, Darrel," said Sasha in an uncomfortable tone. "Can't you levitate that stuff through the brain?" "I could," replied Darrel. "But I have to be in plain sight in order for this to work. So we have to go in there." "I kinda have a thinking for ears," said Sasha. Polly jumps onto Sasha's shoulder and pulls her ear. "Suck it up, Sash!" Polly exclaimed.

"It's incredibly dangerous in there," said Mother Olm. "So be careful." "Got it," said Darrel. He looks down at Hop pop, who feels very concerned about this part of the journey. "Hop pop, are you okay?" "Actually, I think I'm going to sit this one out," said Hop pop.

"Are you sure?" Tint asked. "Is it because of what those jerk guards said?" Anne asked. "I don't think so," said Cronaxx. "Some of us eventually can't keep up with our usual pace. Hop pop is at that first stage." "Okay, Cronaxx can you watch him until we get back?" Darrel asked. "With pleasure," said Cronaxx. "Will you be okay here Hop pop?" Anne asked. "Absolutely," replied Hop pop. "You go on ahead."

The kids arrive at the entrance of Mother Olm's brain, up the stairs. "I am all ears, baby!" said Sprig as they entered the doorway. Sasha, however, stopped in her tracks and turned around. "Sasha," said Anne and Darrel. "But it's gross and I don't wanna!" Sasha cried. "Ugh," groaned Darrel. He slams his staff and levitates Sasha from the ground. The three humans enter the ear cave.

Hop pop and Cronaxx sit next to the gong while Mother Olm offers them some tea. "Oh, thank you," said Hop pop. "No thank you," said Cronaxx. "I'm not thirsty, nor do I have any taste buds. Besides, the tea will just pour out of my ectoplasm."

Inside Mother Olm's ear, the kids hike through the ear passage covered with earwax. Sasha wasn't having a great time on this mission. The gang make their way to the eardrum, where Tint opens

the makeshift door in front of them. "Big wad of POO!" Polly cried. Her echoes bounced through the ear, and Mother Olm heard every word. "Language, lady," she said.

Sasha walks past her with the brain cream in her hands. "Real mature Polly," she said. "Sasha, look out!" Anne cried. Sasha turned her head to Anne, not knowing what she was walking into. Just then, Darrel blasts her with a paralysis spell to stop her in her tracks. She almost walked into a pile of earwax.

Tint takes the wax out of her way, then Darrel unfreezes Sasha. "What just happened?" she asked. "You almost walked into a pile of earwax," replied Darrel. "Anne tried to tell you. Thankfully, I saved your hygiene." Despite being saved, Sasha cringed at the thought of almost being covered in earwax. "Worst mission ever!"

"Best mission ever," said Hop pop. He was resting inside the teacup Mother Olm offered before. "This hot tea is just what my joints needed, guys. Thank you." "Oh you're welcome," said Mother Olm. "You know it took me two hundred years to perfect that recipe."

"Curse these joints of mine," said Hop pop looking to his elbow. "Getting old is the worst." He dunks himself into the tea, until Cronaxx pulls him out. "It's not all bad," he said. "Age comes valuable wisdom. After all, did you think I wouldn't have taught Tint how to do those stances if my hips were fragile?" "Cronaxx is right," said Mother Olm. "Sure you can't do the stuff you usually do, but that doesn't stop you from telling everyone what you know."

"I might know a thing or two about a thing or two," said Hop pop. "Good," said Cronaxx. "What have you learned based on your farming experience?" "I've got decades of horticultural experience," replied Hop pop. "Now you're talking," said Mother Olm. Suddenly, she jolted out of nowhere, surprising the two amphibians. "What's happening?" Hop pop asked. "If that was a jolt reaction," said Cronaxx. "Then the kids must've reached her nervous system."

And Cronaxx wasn't wrong. Inside Mother Olm's head, the kids find themselves blocked by nerve cords. The group take their time trying to get by, until they start getting hit by electrical jolts. Despite getting electrocuted every second, the group continues to the exit that leads to the brain.

"What the heck is this?" Sprig asked. "This must be Mother Olm's brain," replied Tint. "Finally, race you to the other side," said Sprig. However, before he could run, he was caught in Darrel's levitation spell. "Guys, listen to me," he said. "This is now fragile territory. We need to step lightly and carefully, any slip up can cause major damages to Mother Olm."

He puts Sprig down, and Sprig accidentally bumps into an old skeleton of an Olm. The kids look to see it wearing glasses and a doctor's coat. "I think we just found Dr Yohann," said Sasha. "Let's move it along," said Polly.

The group gets out the brain cream and starts spreading it all over Mother Olm's brain. The smell was too much, but the work was quick. "Whew," said Anne. "Balm applied. Mission accomplished." "Thank goodness," said Sasha. "Can we please get out of here already?!"

Suddenly, Polly hears a strange noise. "Hey do you guys hear something, almost like flapping?" "Yeah," said Tint. "I hear it too." Anne gets out her phone and turns on her flashlight. Darrel casts a light spell and holds it up in the air. They all look up to find hybrids of bats and mosquitoes hanging from above Mother Olm's cranium.

"What are those things?" Darrel asked. One of the bat/mosquito hybrids wakes up, causing Sprig and Polly to panic. "BATSQUITOES!" "RUN!" The batsquitoes swoop down, attacking the kids, and draining the brain juice from Mother Olm's brain. "Well that explains the migraines," said Anne.

"Come on!" said Darrel. "We have to get them out of Mother Olm's head before we lose that prophecy!" Darrel fires a small ice blast at

the batsquitoes. But the blast only shivers a few of them. They retaliate by chasing the kids out of the brain and somewhere else inside Mother Olm's head. The chase ends when the kids slip and fall into a hole filled with green goo.

"Ew," said Anne. "What is this stuff," said Sasha. "It's like quicksand!" The group slowly sinks into the goo hearing Sasha's description. "If my hunch is correct," said Tint. with all the hairs sticking out, plus the green goo, I think this is Mother Olm's nose." The group was even more shocked. Sprig was about to say, "Does that mean we're-" "TMI! TMI!" Darrel shouted. "We don't need to hear that!"

"Oh, my ears popped," said Mother Olm. Suddenly the swarm of batsquitoes evacuate from Mother Olm's head. "Where are the kids?" Hop pop asked. They immediately hear muffled screaming after that. "Kids!" Hop pop cried. "Kids, can you hear me?!"

"Hop pop! Cronaxx!" Darrel cried. "We're trapped in Mother Olm's nose!" "Gross gross gross!" Sasha complained. "Quick Mother Olm, sneeze!" Hop pop cried. "I can't sneeze on command," said Mother Olm.

Then Cronaxx came up with an idea. "Then how about we use some herbs that will help you sneeze," he said. "Exactly," said Hop pop. He searches the cave and finds the proper ingredients. "A wild variable of Wartsabi, Liverwart, Ragweed, and mold from this wood. Mother Olm, put your nose near those stairs."

Mother Olm does what she was told, and waits for Hop pop to arrive at the top of the stairs. Hop pop was having trouble, but Cronaxx helped him push on. "Remember, it's your only chance to save the kids," he said. That was enough to get Hop pop to push, despite his joint pains.

"What is that smell?" Mother Olm asked. "A mixture of the most pungent allergy inducing plants in Amphibia," replied Hop pop. "Take a big whiff!" Mother Olm takes a whiff, causing the scent of the herbs to go into her nostrils. The next thing she knew was that her nose

started to twitch. Inside the nose, the kids felt a gust of wind from the inside. Then, they were shot out of Mother Olm's nostrils when she sneezed, "AH CHOO!"

The kids and Hop pop slid down a stairway of green snot. At the end, Anne said, "Bless you!" Darrel and Sasha got up, feeling disgusted that they're covered in earwax and snot. "Worst mission ever!" Sasha shouted.

Sprig and Polly rush up to hug Hop pop. "Hop pop, you saved us!" Sprig cried. "You're the best Hop pop," said Polly. Hop pop felt a sense of greatness, despite his old age. Cronaxx looks at him, smiling in approval.

"Guess you're not so useless after all," said Mother Olm. "Thanks Mother Olm," said Hop pop. Then, out of nowhere, his back suddenly throws out. "Perhaps, it's best to take it easy now," said Cronaxx.

"Hey Mother Olm," said Anne. "Think you can remember that prophecy now?" With the whole head fiasco at a close, it was finally time to learn about the prophecy Mother Olm spoke of. "Oh yeah, the prophecy," said Mother Olm. She gets back into a dramatic position and her fins glow bright purple again. "The great prophecy of the music box that plays the songs between worlds is..." The Plantars and the salamanders gasp in amazement. Darrel, Anne, and Sasha joined hands, waiting for this moment in excitement.

"Nope, still can't remember," said Mother Olm. "OH MY FROGGING FROG!" Darrel shouted. "We went through that whole ordeal for nothing!?" Sasha shouted. "Hey," said Sprig. "Did anyone notice the label on this brain balm says it expired seventy years ago?" Anne facepalmed in response, forgetting to check the expiration date.

Darrel looks up in defeat, only to find more Amphibia writing on the ceiling. "Wait," he said. "Mother Olm, did you happen to write the prophecy in case you forgot it?" "I mean, that's what I would do if I

were to forget something," said Hop pop. Mother Olm smiled, "You're right. That is the prophecy!"

The group gaze with magnificence at the writing and the drawings above their heads. "What does it say?" Anne asked. "Quick, before you forget how to read," said Sasha. Mother Olm glows her fins and begins to tell the prophecy of the music box.

" Four stars burning bright. Come from beyond to expel the Night. Should they fight or embrace the fall. Their choice shall determine the fate of all. " As Mother Olm talked, the blue crystals started glowing brighter. Pink and red flowers bloomed and glowed as well. Anne, Sasha, and Darrel gasped in amazement, hearing the prophecy, trying to put pieces together.

"Four stars," said Sasha. "Is that us?" "It has to be," said Darrel. "We came to Amphibia from a distant planet like stars in the sky. It can't be a coincidence." "Do you burn bright with the power of the stones?" Mother Olm asked.

"I believe me and Anne do," replied Darrel. "When we were charging the stones, I charged mine halfway, that must mean I hold a fraction of my powers." "Yeah, I have my powers," said Anne. "Wait, do Marcy and I get cool anime powers too?" Sasha asked.

"Yes, honey," replied Mother Olm. "You should all get cool anime powers." "But me and Darrel can't control our powers," said Anne. "When King Andrias stole the music box from us, we couldn't-" "Stole it?" Mother Olm asked. "Huh, then King Andrias has stolen the powers which are rightfully yours."

"The stones gave us the powers," said Darrel. Mother Olm nodded, "But so long as one of you retains a piece of that power," said Mother Olm. "you can restore it to your friends." "We can?" Darrel asked. "Mother Olm," said Anne. "What's this prophecy for? What are the stones?" Mother Olm continued to explain the stones.

"The Olms believed they serve a greater purpose, and should be left alone. While others believed their powers should be used for conquest. These conquerors with their arrogance and greed, created an unnatural thing that does not sleep, and will not die. The prophecy is our one shot at salvation. And we believe that your four were summoned to save us from what we've become: The worst version of ourselves."

The three humans look up to see four stones, the same colors as the music box. And above it were the eyes of the unnatural being. Darrel recognized them right away. Then, they looked over to see four figures fighting against an amphibious beast. Holding a flame in the palm of its hand. The figures look like humans, each with their color of representation. Darrel smiled, "We might have a chance to get her back," he thought. Two figures, one pink and one blue, were wielding swords. The red figure was holding a staff and casting a spell. And the green figure was drawing its bow at the monster. All working together to stop the unnatural being.

"Unnatural thing?" Anne asked. "The Core," replied Darrel. "What's the Core?" Sasha asked. "It's a machine that consists of the greatest minds in all of Amphibia," said Darrel. "It must be the unnatural being that does not sleep, and will not die. These minds are conquerors, the worst of the worst, and we have to stop them." The three humans nodded in agreement.

"Thanks Mother Olm," said Anne. "You've given us a huge piece of the puzzle." "Now all we need are showers," said Sasha. She looks at her uniform, all covered in gunk and goo, and cringes at the sight of it. "Happen to have one of those?" Darrel smiles, "Allow me, Sasha."

He raises his staff and inflates a large soap bubble, surrounding Sasha. "Hold your breath unless you want suds in your lungs," said Darrel. Sasha holds her breath, and all the gunk is instantly washed off. Darrel pops the bubble with his staff, finishing Sasha's wash cycle. "Thanks Darrel, I appreciate it," said Sasha. "Anytime," said Darrel. "So, who's next?"

One View over the King's Nest

Chapter 64 - One View over the King's Nest

Darrel wakes up the next day after a long day of evacuating and recruiting frogs. He was exhausted from running and fighting because the group came across an old foe. After they take a wrong turn, the group enter an isolated garden utopia, under the leadership of their old foe. Gary, the mind controlling fungi. Before they could escape, Andrias' robots came and burned down the whole village. However, thanks to Hop pop's kindness, the group and Gary's followers fought back against the robots and they joined the resistance.

Inside his cave, Darrel takes out the two photos his family packed up for him. One of his parents and sisters. And the other photo is of him, Anne, Sasha, and Marcy. Tint comes in and asks Darrel if he would like to see progress on the resistance camp. Darrel accepts and the two leave the cave. Darrel puts the photo of him and his friends in his pocket.

Darrel and Tint take a walk in the underground park and find Gary and a couple of his followers growing a new garden. "Hey Gary," said Darrel. "How's the new garden coming along?" "It's going so well," said Gary. "And it's more fun to have frogs willingly follow me instead of forcing them." Tint smiled, "I'm glad."

Darrel soon heads into the mission briefing room and finds Sasha and Grime going over the next plan of attack. "Oh, hey Darrel," said Sasha. "Sorry, there's no new mission for you today." "Thanks for getting more frogs for the resistance," said Grime. "Now we still need to ask for help from the newts and the salamanders." "We'll find a way," said Darrel.

Darrel leaves the mission room and makes his way across the underground base. He finds Sprig, Ivy, Polly, Maggie, and her triplet

siblings running around. "Hey guys," said Sprig. "How's it going?" "So far no assignments," said Tint. "We're pretty much going over our next move to recruiting new members." "We're going to go to Stumpy's for some food, wanna come?" Maddie asked. "Sure," replied Tint. "Count me out," said Darrel. "I'm not hungry."

Darrel walks off while Tint joins the kids at Stumpy's. Darrel smiles to see Tint hanging out with others. Usually, he thought wizards don't stay in one place. But Tint is not like any wizard he read in books. He kept going until he came across the Plantar's cave. Inside, he finds Anne cleaning her sword.

"Hey Anne," said Darrel. Anne looks up and smiles at Darrel. "Hey Darrel," she said. "What's up?" "Well, Gary is working on a new garden. Sasha and Grime are going over our next plan. And Tint is hanging out with our friends at Stumpy's," replied Darrel. "So, we pretty much got a day to ourselves."

Darrel sits next to Anne and she blushes at how close they are. "Sheesh, when was the last time we spent time alone together?" she asked. "Christmas night, under the mistletoe," replied Darrel. "So, what do you want to do?" Anne smirked, and touched his hand. "We could..." The two inched closer and closer. Darrel was excited to know what she was going to ask her. "... play this new co-op battle game together." Anne holds up her phone and shows a new tag team game that she downloaded on her phone. "You're on," said Darrel.

Then suddenly, Darrel gets a familiar tingling vibe in his head. 'It can't be,' he thought. 'What are they up to?' "Hold that game, Anne," said Darrel. "Something's wrong." "What is it?" Anne asked. "It's the Core," he replied. "It's active and I think my powers are trying to connect with it." "Okay," said Anne. "But be careful." "I will," said Darrel. He gives Anne a quick kiss, making her blush and then races to his cave.

Inside his cave, Cronaxx was meditating in the quiet environment. That is until he was interrupted by Darrel and Tint's presence.

"What's going on?" he asked. "The Core is active," said Darrel. "And my powers are trying to get inside its mind. I have to let my powers do the work if we want to know their next move."

"Hold on," said Tint. "What if the Core can also see through your eyes? Our hidden base would be compromised." "That's why no one is going in my cave," said Darrel as he takes a seat, legs crossed, and ready for infiltration. "Guard the entrance, and don't let anyone in. And try to keep the noise to a minimum." "Sure thing buddy," said Tint. "Good luck."

Darrel nods and closes his eyes. Tint and Cronaxx leave the cave and block the door with curtains. Darrel lets go of his struggles and lets his magic powers do the work. The moment he opens his eyes, he gives off the same orange and red glow like the one from Earth. 'Okay,' he thought. 'Let's see what I can see.'

Inside Andrias' floating castle, the Core was looking at Marcy's old phone. They have taken it apart to inspect the human device. Darrel didn't know what to expect, so he kept his mouth and mind shut. He really hated seeing Marcy being used as a vessel for the Core. "As we thought," they said. "This technology is pathetic!"

Turning around, the Core sees Andrias carrying a tray of what could be possibly food. "Ahem," Andrias cleared his throat. "Greetings Marcy- I mean the Core- MarCore? Okay what do I call you?" Clearly Andrias was having a hard time calling his machine ruler by Marcy, because that thing wasn't Marcy anymore.

"Hmm," the Core thought. "Good question big guy." Then, the Core thought of a dark and terrifying name. "Why don't you call us Darcy." Darrel cringed at the name and let a tear flow out of his eye.

"Darcy?" Andrias asked. "Yeah, you know, like Dark Marcy," said Darcy. "It's a reference to one of Marcy's video games. We searched her memories and the name appeals to us." Darrel was surprised that the Core would know everything about Marcy just by processing her memories.

"So is Marcy in there?" Andrias asked. Darrel quietly pleaded for an answer, hoping that Marcy in some way was still inside that horrific vessel of multiple minds. "No, no no," replied Darcy. "This is her body, but we got her locked up in a little room up here." Darrel quietly exhaled in relief, Marcy is inside but she's still trapped. So Darrel took that as a spark of hope.

"We're the ones in control," said Darcy. "Although we've inherited some of her quirks." Darrel wasn't surprised about that, he knew about Marcy's quirks. He even had a few quirks of his own. He knows more about Marcy than she knows about him. He mostly kept to himself as they grew up together.

"Speaking of which," said Andrias. "Here are those cupcakes you asked for." He opens the dome on the plate, revealing it to be Marcy's favorite cupcakes. 'I knew they would be Marcy's favorite,' he thought. "What was that?" Darcy asked.

Darrel stopped thinking at that instant, hoping Darcy didn't hear him. "I uh, said I have those cupcakes," said Andrias. "Oh yeah," said Darcy. "Sorry, I thought I heard something else." Darcy approaches the cupcakes, "Mmm, red velvet with Ube frosting, Marcy's fav. We can't tell you how delighted we are to finally have a body."

"Now then, follow us," said Darcy. "We have a very important mission for you." Then Darcy fell flat on their face, just like Marcy. "This thing needs calibration," said Darcy. Darrel groaned at the sound of that. There was nothing wrong with Marcy Wu.

Andrias and Darcy began walking down the corridor that was in the basement. "So we need to purge our system of some excess data," said Darcy. "Redundant memories, that sort of thing. This requires a full system reboot and you're the only one we trust to-"

Darcy turns around to see Andrias looking glum at a torn painting. Darrel looks as well, and was curious as to what it was. "Andrias?" Darcy asked. Andrias just stares down at the torn painting, showing

four figures. One, that looks like a younger version of himself, and three amphibians. A frog, a toad, and a salamander.

"Hmm," thought Darcy. "Maybe we're not the only ones who need to let go of old memories." "Nonsense," said Andrias. "The past means nothing to me." The two continue to walk down to the main chambers and Andrias shuts down Darcy to reboot their data. And with Darcy turned off, Darrel's vision goes dark.

His disconnection from the Core returns him to his cave and calls to Tint and Cronaxx to come back in. "What did you see?" Tint asked. "I saw Andrias and the Core," replied Darrel. "They took apart Marcy's phone to study human technology. The Core is even going by the name Darcy." "Oh my," said Cronaxx. "Yeah, they uploaded her memory from one of her favorite video game references," said Darrel.

"Before they could, Andrias stopped at what looked like a torn painting." "Wait, did that painting have four figures on it?" Tint asked. "Yes," said Darrel. "How did you know?" "Because I saw it when Marcy invited us overnight," replied Tint. "And Uncle Cronaxx looked younger on it."

The two looked at Cronaxx, who had a sad look on his face. "Uncle," said Tint. "Was Andrias using you? Or were you two really friends?" Cronaxx looked at his students, feeling puzzled with what Cronaxx left behind after his betrayal.

"It's true," he said. "We were friends at first. But one day, lines were crossed. Lines we knew we could never come back from." "Please," said Darrel. "Tell us, what was Andrias like, before you left him."

The two sat down and Cronaxx created a vision portal and showed them the undamaged portrait of him, Andrias, and the other two friends. "Before Andrias was king, he was known as Prince Andrias..." Darrel and Tint watched carefully what Cronaxx was trying to show them.

Prince Andrias was making his way home after grabbing the portrait. Along the way back, a young Cronaxx was exiting the library and finds Andrias heading home. "Hello, Andi," he said. "Hey Cro-cro," said Prince Andrias. "How's the research coming along?" "Going so well," said Cronaxx. "It makes me feel a little better knowing my dream is coming true."

"My father and I really appreciate all you've done for us," said Prince Andrias. "I believe your family would be proud too." "Yeah," said Cronaxx. "I just wish my brother Cyrus could be around to see this." He takes out a locket holding two photos. One of him, and one of Cyrus, his brother. "He would want you to fulfill your dream," said Prince Andrias. "No one could've predicted that industrial accident."

"Still," said Cronaxx. "I wish he was here." Andrias could see how upset his wizard friend was, so he decided to cheer him up. "Hey, what's that behind your fins?" He pulls it out to reveal a Newtopian copper coin, making Cronaxx smile. Cronaxx takes the coin and hugs Prince Andrias. "You always know how to make me feel better, my friend."

"Come on," said Prince Andrias. "I want to show you, Barrel, and Leif something very special together," "Does it have something to do with what's on your back?" Cronaxx asked. "Yep," replied Prince Andrias. The two make their way to the castle.

At the castle walls they find a toad guarding the front gates. That toad was also one of their best friends. Cronaxx appears out of thin air in front of the Toad. "Hey Barrel," he said. "Hey Cronaxx," said Barrel. "How's it going?" "Just another day of researching possible new worlds until we actually see them," replied Cronaxx.

While he's talking, Prince Andrias appears from the castle walls and jumps Barrel. Holding him in a lock, Andrias gloats. "I'm disappointed Barrel. Shouldn't a Newtopian guard always be aware of his surroundings?"

"Shouldn't Amphibia royalty know never to put a toad in a headlock?" Barrel asked as he croaked loose from Andiras' grip. After breaking free, Barrel kicks Andiras down and Cronaxx cheers Barrel's victory. "Another victory for Barrel." Barrel scratches another tally on the wall.

"Oh yeah, Leif left a note for you." Barrel gives Andrias a piece of red paper, which is shown to be blank. "I don't know why she even bothered," said Barrel. "It's their way of communication," said Cronaxx. "There's this thing called invisible ink." "Invisible to others perhaps," said Prince Andrias. "We came up with the idea to leave secret messages for each other."

"Heh, yeah right," said Barrel. "She only taught you that after she and Cronaxx split up. No offense." Cronaxx shrugged, "It's okay, I wanted to pursue my dreams first before getting serious with others." "She's in the garden," said Prince Andrias. "Come on, let's go!" The three friends make haste to the kingdom's underground garden.

There they find their pink frog friend Leif, balancing on top of a large flower. "Hey Leif, how's it going?" Prince Andrias asked. Leif hushed them, "I have just perfected a dance that mesmerizes any creature that watches. Behold."

Cronaxx, Barrel, and Andrias watch as she perfects her dance, causing the moss creatures to sway to the rhythm. Even Barrel was mesmerized by the dance. Cronaxx bounced his head to the rhythm, and Andiras looked away, blushing.

"See," said Leif. "Even the strangest interdimensional animals love it." "That was weird," said Barrel. "Anyone else just black out?" "I'm impressed," said Cronaxx. "Brilliant," said Prince Andrias. "Classic Leif." "Thanks, 'Drias," said Leif. "Say, what ya got there?" She points to the covered portrait Andrias has on his back.

"Oh I almost forgot," he said. "Your surprise," He shows them the portrait, leaving his best friends in awe. "Ta da, an official portrait of us." "It looks just like us," said Barrel. "It's even got me on my good

side," said Cronaxx. "That's a huge honor," said Leif. "What's the occasion?"

"Dad's appointing me to lead the next invasion," said Andrias. "If you're okay with that, Cronaxx." "As long as we get to express our glory to countless worlds, and not hurt anyone, I suppose it'll be okay."

"Hey," said Prince Andrias. "Cronaxx, if it wasn't for you, or any of you guys, I never would've made it this far. Your dream and our conquest is going to be a reality. Thank you all so much. I mean it." Cronaxx, Barrel, and Leif smile at the gesture. "Thank you 'Drias," said Leif. "Now what are we standing around for? We gotta celebrate."

"May I suggest, running through the hallways screaming at the top of our lungs?" Barrel asked. "You're on!" Cronaxx cheered. "Sounds good to me," said Andrias. "Let's go." The four proceed to run through the hallways screaming, only to be stopped by the current King of Newtopia. King Aldrich.

"Ahh, there you are, son," said Aldrich. "Come with me, we have much to discuss." "We'll catch up with you later 'Drias," said Barrel. "It'll be okay," said Cronaxx. "Sorry guys, gotta do prince stuff," said Andrias as he followed his father.

"Come on, guys," said Cronaxx. "We can go into my chambers and discuss plans on what to do in other worlds." "Sure," said Leif. "I've got nothing better to do," said Barrel. The three friends reach the door to Cronaxx's main chambers where he's been working on his dream. The door has no handle, no lock, the only way in is with magic.

"Allow me," said Cronaxx. He raises his hands and says the magic words, "Caput Draconis." And in that instant, the cobblestones begin moving in the shape of a door. The three enter and show Cronaxx's main study. Most of it were drawings of stars, constellations, and possible distant planets.

Barrel comes across one of the drawings that look like the Eternal Staff. "What's this magic stick?" he asked. "That's the Eternal Staff," said Cronaxx. "It was created by the first wizard ever to walk in Amphibia. It was said to have been lost in the wilderness, and no other wizard has ever found it yet." "Can't anyone find it?" Barrel asked. "Not even the strongest of warriors can find the staff," said Cronaxx. "That'd be like no one else could wield your warhammer."

"Forget that," said Leif. "So what's our first move?" "Here's what we could do," said Cronaxx. He takes a crystal and places it on a projectile device. It projects the first planet Cronaxx plans to visit: Earth. "We go to Earth first and see what kind of natural resources they have that the inhibitors thrive on." "Oohh," said Barrel and Leif. "In exchange," said Cronaxx. "We show them what we can do as a civilization.: Magical spells combined with everyday technology. Combined with their resources, our worlds could be twice as powerful."

"Isn't invading Earth what the king wants?" Barrel asked. "Well, as long as we keep Earth thriving, I'd like to think of it as sharing our greatness to other worlds," said Cronaxx. "Me too," said Leif. "I can't wait to see what creatures they have living here."

"And with Andrias by our side, nothing will stop us," said Barrel. The three cheer with great pride, just as Andrias enters Cronaxx's chambers. "Hey guys," he said. "Want to see something really cool?"

Prince Andrias shows them the key to the Calamity box, shocking Cronaxx. "Isn't that the key to the music box?" he asked. "The one I crafted?" "Indeed, my friend," replied Prince Andrias. "My father gave me this. It's only a matter of time before we start my mission."

That night, Prince Andrias, Cronaxx, and the others snuck into the room where the box is being kept. Andrias turns the key, and the four lights begin to glow, opening the door. They walk in to find the music box standing on the column, and a portal device beside the box, ready for the foreseeable future.

"And this is where the magic happens, literally," said Andrias. "I know," said Cronaxx. "I made it happen." "So it's already official?" Barrel asked. "Well it's not announced yet," said Andrias.

He turns to find Leif holding onto the box. "Then I bet you'd get into trouble if anything happened to this, huh?" she asked. "Please be careful Leif," said Cronaxx. "That box is very delicate. If anything happened to the stones-" "Cronaxx is right, Leif," said Andrias. "Put that box back."

However, Leif and Barrel decided to play a short game of keep away. Andrias and Cronaxx wanted nothing to happen to the box. "Please, magic is not to be played with," said Cronaxx. "Come on guys, it's important to us," said Andrias.

Then just as Barrel threw the box, Leif caught it. As she caught it, she touched the four stones in the palm of her hand. The stones give off a flash of light, and Leif starts to see strange images. Some were the destruction of Amphibia, others were images of the prophecy and the tapestry from the castle. She sees an image of Cyrus and a giant ax swinging down on him. Then, she starts to see the moon come crashing down onto their planet.

Leif drops the box and falls to her knees. "Leif!" Andrias cried. "Are you okay?" "What happened?" Barrel asked. "Give her some air," said Cronaxx. "I saw something," said Lief. "Leif, what did you see?" Cronaxx asked. "Andrias," said Leif, touching Andrias' hand. "If you go through with this mission, if we continue to use the box, I think Amphibia is doomed."

"What?" Cronaxx asked. "How? It can't be possible. I ran through all the possibilities." "It's true," said Leif. "I saw Cyrus too, and an ax. I think something really bad happened to him." She started crying, leaving her in the comfort of her friends.

The very next day, Leif came up to King Aldrich and told the council everything. "I think the music box is giving me a warning," said Leif. "As a gardener, I know the dangers of messing with the fragile

ecosystem. And I believe that by interfering with other dimensions, we have upset the ecosystem of the multiverse."

Cronaxx stood by her side, "I believe she's telling the truth. As a wizard, I should know that even a single grain of sand can tip the scale. Upsetting the balance brings nothing but chaos and destruction. Fire and brimstone spreading across life. Laughter and joy, replaced with screams of pain and agony."

"That is why I've decided," said Leif. "We should stop using the box." Cronaxx was upset, but so was the council. They waited for this time to come for a while now, and Cronaxx was anxious to explore new worlds. But not at the expense of others getting hurt.

King Aldrich took a moment, then the Core's eye gave him the decision they wanted. Aldrich refused, "Nonsense, you sound like those cowardly Olms. You speak of fate and warnings but the stones are our sacred birthright. They are unique to our world and PROOF that only we are destined to conquer."

"Your majesty, please," said Cronaxx. "I should know more than any of us here. And if what Leif says is true, we can't take that risk." "SILENCE!" Aldrich commanded, slamming his ax down. "The expedition will continue as planned. With the prince presiding. And as for you 'wizard'. If you know what's good for you, you can make sure that everything goes smoothly and not fall like your clumsy brother. This council is adjourned."

Cronaxx, Leif, and Barrel leave the throne room with their heads down. Cronaxx thought back to the ax that King Aldrich slammed down and thought of what Leif said about Cyrus and the ax. 'My brother is not always clumsy. He finds success in failures,' he thought.

The three friends see King Aldrich leave and they walk back in to see Andrias. "Well that didn't go great," said Leif. "Yeah, sorry," said Prince Andiras. "But that's okay, you're in charge," said Leif. "You can just decide not to use the box."

"It's not that simple, Leif," said Prince Andrias. "Our society is built on these expeditions." "Look I know this won't be easy," said Leif. "But we have your back." "That's right," said Cronaxx. "We're your best friends." Barrel gives them a thumbs up in approval. "See? Together we can use your power for good."

"Look Leif!" Andrias shouted. "Maybe you should just focus on gardening and leave the ruling to me, okay?!" "Andrias!" Cronaxx shouted. "Please, Leif is your friend." Cronaxx started to grow upset. He'd never seen Andrias lash out like that before in front of his friends. And Andrias was most upset with how he reacted.

Thankfully he came to his senses and started to apologize. "Sorry, that was harsh. I'm just under a lot of pressure right now. You know?" "For sure," said Leif. "I get it. Friends?" Andrias sighed in relief, "Friends." The four amphibians hug it out, hoping to put it all behind them.

Shortly after, Andrias leaves to follow his father. And Barrel goes back outside to guard the gates. Leaving Cronaxx and Leif all alone. "Cronaxx, listen," said Leif. "I can't stand idly by while we let our home get destroyed." She turns to Cronaxx, who is suddenly getting horrible vibes in his head.

Inside Cronaxx's head, he starts to feel his brother working in his lab. He even hears his voice, "You can't do this! What if something goes wrong!?" "This is our destiny!" shouted another voice. "I won't make another weapon for your cause," said Cyrus. "Not while I know that my weapons will hurt others." "Then I can't let you live, traitor!" said the second voice. "Your majesty! STOP!" Then, the figure swings his ax, and all goes white.

"Cronaxx," said Leif. "Are you okay?" "Leif," said Cronaxx in tears. "It was my dream to explore new worlds." "I know Cronaxx. I know," said Leif as she hugged her friend. "But sometimes, to do what's right, we have to be steady. And give up the thing we want the most," Cronaxx shows Leif the key to the music box. "Even our dreams."

Leif was most surprised. "Are you sure?" "I can't let anyone else get hurt. Not here, and not in other worlds."

Prince Andrias follows his father, making sure he does his royal duties properly. "Any orders for the portal operation tomorrow, your highness?" asked the advisors. "Don't ask me," said Aldrich. "Andrias is calling the shots tomorrow. Show them the key, son."

"Oh yes of course," said Andrias. He reaches for the key in his pocket, but his worst fears have been realized. For in place of the key, was the same copper coin he gave to Cronaxx. "Umm, be right back," Andrias makes haste to the box room with Aldrich glaring in disappointment.

Back in the box chambers, Cronaxx and Leif prepare to make their stand. "So what do we do?" Leif asked. Cronaxx gives her the key to the box. "You take the box and use it to transport it to a new world. I must stay to make sure no one creates a duplicate. Even if it means destroying all my life's work."

"Leif, Cronaxx? What are you doing?" The two look to see Andrias appear in the doorway. "The time has come for us to draw our own lines, Andrias," said Cronaxx. "Decide where we go from here." "If you won't stop this, we will," said Leif.

She grabs the box and prepares to make a run for it. "Don't!" Andrias cried. Cronaxx casts a lightning bolt on the floor allowing them a chance to escape the room. They make a break for it with Andrias chasing after them. They pass Barrel walking in the halls, and Andrias bumps into him.

"Hey what's the ruckus?" he asked. "Leif and Cronaxx have betrayed us!" Andrias cried. "What?" Barrel asked. "They would never do that." "I saw it with my own eyes," said Andrias. He picks up Barrel and the two pursue the frog and salamander. "Come on," said Andrias. "We gotta find them before they do something crazy."

They run into Cyrus' old assembly line, with Barrel and Andrias in tow. "I'll cut them off," said Barrel as he climbed into a hidden passageway behind a painting. Thanks to his warhammer, Barrel was able to cut them off.

"Stop right there you two!" he said. "Don't make me do this." Barrel gets in a battle stance. "Barrel, please trust us," said Leif. "What we do, we do for all of us." Barrel hesitated at that moment. He didn't want to fight his friends. "Geez Leif, I don't know."

"You should know this," said Cronaxx. "Aldrich did it." "Did what?" Barrel asked. "In this very room, he killed my brother Cyrus," replied Cronaxx. "That was no accident." Barrel was most surprised. "No, he couldn't, he said it was an accident." "They were the only ones here," said Cronaxx. "And Aldrich comes back alone, and all dirty."

"STOP!" Andrias shouted. Cronaxx and Leif jumped over Barrel and Andrias pushed him aside. The two dodge his plasma sword attacks and Leif fires a robot blaster at him. Andrias dodged every attack and deflected one of the blasts to Cronaxx's eye, giving him a big scar in the process. Cronaxx pushes them back with his wind magic and disappears, Leif crawls through the vents leading to the garden.

"You had a chance to stop them!" Andrias shouted at Barrel. "What happened?" "They confused me," replied Barrel. "Cronaxx said something about your father killing Cyrus." "LIES!" Andrias shouted.

Cronaxx meets up with Leif in the garden and she climbs up onto one of the moss men. "This is where we part ways," said Cronaxx, covering his left eye. "Take the box and never come back to Amphibia." "Okay," said Leif. "And Cronaxx..." She takes his hand and says, "You were the best friend I ever had." She kisses his cheek goodbye, then Cronaxx says. "You always will be. No matter how far apart we are."

Cronaxx snaps his fingers and teleports himself into his chambers. He takes his satchel and only takes the drawing of the Eternal Staff with him. "No one can know, not even me. Not anymore." He

reached up to the sky and papers started flying in circles. 'I'm so sorry Cyrus,' he thought.

"Inflamore," he called. Papers of his maps, constellations, blueprints of new boxes, started to go up in flames. All his hard work, his dreams, started burning to a crisp. Suddenly, he heard his brother's robots preparing to breach the front door to his chambers. Cronaxx had to act fast.

"Felite Incantato!" He points his hands down and causes his chambers to explode. The castle shook, causing the inhabitants to panic. The robots outside the door were damaged by the cobblestone blocking the passageway

Cronaxx was then shown flying away, thanks to the blast. Then he pointed his finger at his own head. "Obliviate!" A bright light comes from his finger and then diminishes after a few seconds. Cronaxx closes his eyes and disappears from the city of Newtopia.

Meanwhile, Prince Andrias and Barrel hear the explosion and go over to investigate. They find the room entirely destroyed. "This was Cronaxx's room," said Barrel. Andrias looks out and finds the gates of Newtopia destroyed as well. Leif and Cronaxx have escaped, thanks to their combined efforts.

"Leif, Cronaxx," said Andrias. He could only watch as two of his close friends ran away, preventing disaster to Amphibia. A disaster that Andrias ignored thanks to his family's legacy on the line. His depression was replaced with anger and deception. And a great cry rose out of the castle. "NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!"

Outside the kingdom, Leif watched as Cronaxx's room exploded and he flew across the sky. On the moss man, she rode with all her might. But she knew she could never come back. All she could do was take Cronaxx's advice and leave for a new world. Never to return. But the only way to do that was to find help. "We must find the Olms," she said. "They'll know what to do. I'm sorry, my friend. This thing can't stay in Amphibia."

Darrel and Tint watched in heartbreak. "Eventually," said Cronaxx. "As I told you before, I was found by your father, he took me in, and the rest was history for our family. As for King Aldrich, he and the Core knew about the prophecy and waited for the box to eventually return. Our species were divided, thanks to the crown's rule. I've not heard from Barrel ever since, and Andrias well, my guess is he didn't want to see our painting again so..."

"So he scratched it out of anger," said Darrel. Suddenly, he starts getting vibes again. "The Core's coming back," he said. "Guard the door." Tint and Cronaxx nodded, and Darrel got back in position.

Darcy was completely recharged from their system reboot and wakes up to see Andrias burning the old portrait of him, Cronaxx, Leif, and Barrel. "Alright, you did it," said Darcy. They get up from their resting chair and walk up to Andrias. "Gold star for you bud. But now that's taken care of. Who's ready to finally start invading Earth?!"

"Ready?" Andrias asked. "After a thousand years, I've thought of nothing else." Andrias looks down at the fireplace, aware that the path he's going down is a one way trip. Darcy grinned in response, and then a familiar voice came out of them. "Why son, I think I'm almost proud of you."

Darrel gets cold chills shivering down his spine and blurts out, "King Aldrich?" Darcy turns their head, hearing Darrel's voice. "Who said that?" "I didn't say anything," replied Andrias. "No, I heard..." Then Darcy grinned again, "Well, well, well, it would seem we have a visitor."

Just then, Darrel disconnects with Darcy's collection of minds, and makes his way out of the base with his eyes closed. Making sure Darcy can't see where he is. He finds himself out of the base and into the outskirts where he first arrived in Amphibia from Earth.

Tint and Cronaxx find him looking at the Newtopian castle. "It was because of Marcy that I met you two," said Darrel. "The reason I got

magical abilities, the reason my mom is still alive. She spared me from losing another family member, she saved my happiness." He tightens his grip on the Eternal Staff. "And now, she's trapped. Being used against her will! Scared, not being able to wake up from this nightmare!"

"We will stop them," said Cronaxx. "When the time is right, we will take our stand. And you two will face your enemies. Only then, will you become great wizards." Darrel and Tint smile at their guiding friend. Then, Tint had a terrible thought. "You must be careful Darrel. In order to rescue Marcy, you'll probably have to fight Darcy."

"I know Tint," said Darrel, turning back to the castle. "I know." He lets a couple tears roll down his face, then takes the photo out of his pocket and looks down at it. "But Marcy saved me. And I will not abandon her." His eyes glowed red for a brief second as he glared up at the castle. Then he started to look back at all the good memories he had of Marcy, leading up to this point. 'We're coming, Marcy,' he thought. 'And this time, we're all going home, together.'

Newts, Salamanders, and Kill-A-Moths

Chapter 65 - Newts, Salamanders, and Kill-a-moths

Back in Wartwood, Sasha was preparing the next move by recruiting more amphibians for the resistance. While she was going over her map, Darrel and Anne were waiting for their next assignments. "So what do you think our next assignment's going to be?" Anne asked. "We'll find out shortly," replied Darrel.

"Alright, Anne, Darrel," said Sasha. "Step inside, I've got a mission for each of you." Darrel and Anne look to each other and walk into the briefing room. "Okay," said Sasha. "As you know, we need more civilians to fight with us in our army. And now that we've got frogs and toads on our side, all that's left are two more species to join us."

"The newts and the salamanders," said Darrel. "That's right," said Sasha. "Our informants tell us that the salamanders are finding sanctuary in the abandoned olm caves." Sasha points to the location on the map. "Darrel, I'll need you and Tint to go and convince them to join us."

"You can count on us," said Tint. "We won't let you down," said Darrel. "Good," said Sasha. "Anne, I'll need you and Sprig to recruit the newts. We've had reports that a group is secretly camped out in the woods outside of Wartwood somewhere."

"We're on it," said Anne. "Then get to it," said Sasha. "After this, we'll have plenty of fighters in the resistance to go against Andrias." "But that leaves us with another question," said Sprig. "How are we going to get up in the sky?" "Clipper can only carry a few of us at a time," said Darrel. "But we'll discuss this later."

The teams of two head out of the base and go their separate ways to recruit new fighters. Darrel and Tint travel back to quallerer's pass to find the abandoned olm caves. Anne and Sprig head into the forests

to look for the squad of newts. Both teams looking at the same time will have a better shot at making new recruits faster that way.

At quallerer's pass, Darrel and Tint find the place abandoned. After the destruction of the drill-bot, Andrias took his mining facility elsewhere for his cause. "So how are we going to find the salamanders?" Darrel asked. "Leave that to me," replied Tint.

Tint takes a quick whiff from his nose and uses his magic to trace small groups in different locations. The magical aura creates visual salamander tracks leading to collapsed caves. Darrel and Tint smile knowing where to start looking. Darrel levitates a few boulders away from the cave entrance and the two start looking.

Meanwhile, Anne and Sprig were keeping watch for the pack of newts liberating supply crates in the forests. They see a caravan of supplies hiking down the trail, and are surprised to see willing subjects working for the tyrant king.

"Those newts and toads are wearing Andrias' armor," said Anne, looking through the binoculars. "How can anyone choose to be on Andrias' side?" "Ugh, those traitors," complained Sprig. Suddenly, Sprig spots something. Or someone. "Wait a second, who's that?"

They use the binoculars and find a small injured newt in the middle of the road. The caravan stops, showing guilt and concern for the child. But then, the group was ambushed by a band of newts. Archers at the ready, aiming at the caravan. Thanks to their combined efforts, the band of newts liberated the supply caravan and disappeared into the forests.

Anne and Sprig were surprised. "Wow, rebel newts!" "Awesome, let's see if they'll join us." But before they could, they found themselves surrounded by the rebel newts. Archers at the ready, Anne and Sprig try to reason with them. "Woah, we're on the same side."

Then, a newt laughed, "I'm on no one's side but my own." Anne and Sprig recognized that voice right away. They knew that newt was

familiar somehow. "Wait, I know that voice," said Anne.

The newt jumps out, parkouring from the trees and landing in front of Anne and Sprig. That newt was their old babysitter, slash instructor, Tritonio. "Tritonio, I should have known," said Anne. She wasn't very happy to see him, considering he was a master thief.

"Well well well," said Tritonio. "If it isn't two of my best pupils. Still have my family sword, Anne?" "Why don't you come over here and find out," said Anne as she draws her sword to Tritonio. "Charming," he said. "Well we had a great 'ha ha' catching up. But we're in a hurry."

Tritonio calls his troops to relieve them of their supplies. "Typical," said Anne. "The world is falling apart, and you're still just looking out for yourself." "Mr Tritonio," called the young newt who staged his injury. "How'd I do?" "Excellent my little Jojo potato," replied Tritonio. "And I heard those soldiers say there's going to be an even bigger caravan passing through the woods at three o' clock."

"Great recon work Jojo," said Tritonio patting his head. "But Mr Tritonio, how will we get past the collared beasts that guard the caravan?" Jojo asked. "Ugh, not those things again," said their buff newt. "Those were such a pain last time."

Sprig knew what they were talking about when they mentioned collared beasts. "They're easy to take down once you know the trick," he said. Tritonio was most pleased, "So you've dealt with them before? What am I saying, of course you have. You are the smartest, bravest pupils I've ever had."

"You're just buttering us up so we'll help you," said Anne. "And it's working," said Sprig. "Come on Anne let's help them." Anne was unimpressed, not letting go with what Tritonio tried to do to them in the past. Eventually, she gave in. "Fine, but only if they join the resistance afterwards. And no backstabbing, double crossing, or other such deception." "You wound me, Anne," said Tritonio. "But you got yourself a deal. Come my friends, to the secret hideout."

"Wait," said Anne. "Before we go, what's up with the tights?" Tritonio looks down at his green tights and flexes in front of the two.

"Reduces friction, we run faster, and we look amazing," replied Tritonio. "I shouldn't have asked," regretted Anne.

Back at the abandoned caverns, Darrel and Tint dive deep into the caves to find the group of salamanders. Their trail takes them down to the point where they find crystals glowing in the dark. Darrel and Tint were most pleased with the view.

"This is amazing," said Darrel. "Don't let your guard down," said Tint. "Salamanders can be tricky." The two continue down the cave, until the crystals are high enough to see their reflections.

Before they could go any further, Darrel stops and looks at his reflection. But his reflection looked much different. He looked much older, in his late twenties. He was wearing normal attire like everyone else in Los Angeles. He looks down at his left hand which has a burn scar in between his middle and ring finger. And on his ring finger was a wedding band.

He looks up to see an older Anne standing by his side, smiling. Tint looks to see Darrel smiling at his future self. "These crystals reflect on different universes," said Tint. "That reflection shows a happy future for yourself."

"So it's not my future?" Darrel asked. "Of course not," replied Tint. "Your future isn't set in stone. No one is. Your future is whatever you make it. So make it a good one." Darrel smiled and nodded.

After a few more turns in the caves, they find an active campfire with a large group of salamanders. Trying not to scare them off, Tint calls from a fair distance. "Excuse me." The salamanders turn to their attention and gasp.

"Who are you?" asked one of the salamanders. "We're representatives of the Resistance," said Tint. "And we seek those we need to join our cause." The Salamanders weren't easily convinced.

"No," they said. "We're seeking the Olms for sanctuary." Suddenly, the group was ambushed by another squadron of salamanders. They blew moon dust around the camp, knocking them all out.

Back in the forests, Anne and Sprig join Tritonio and his merry men for a pre-ambush feast. Their base consists of pitched tents, a crow's nest, a bonfire, and training equipment. Sprig was eating freshly cooked food and a giant newt sat down next to him. "So why do they call you Little Louise?" Sprig asked the big newt. "You're gigantic." "That's the joke," replied Little Louise. "Ehh, I don't get it," said Sprig.

"And voila," said Tritonio. He and Anne were going over their plan to ambush the caravan. "We ride away from the caravan victorious." Anne was mostly impressed with going over their stealthy strategy. "Wow, you have a real talent with strategy," she said. "Too bad you're a no good backstabbing scallywag."

"You'd be a scallywag too if you grew up like me," said Tritonio. He explains to Anne and Sprig that he wasn't always a criminal. When he was young, he was poor, alone, and had no one. He had to learn to survive by joining other street urchins in the city. Eventually, those urchins abandon him when things get rough. He had to pay a hefty price for their wrong doings.

"When things get bad, it's always everyone for themselves," finished Tritonio. Anne was shocked at how Tritonio would see things. Even at a time when everyone is terrified of their king's plans for world conquest. "You're telling me if push came to shove, you'd even leave these guys in the dust?"

"It is the law of the streets," said Tritonio. "No loyalties, no attachments." "My boyfriend would never agree with you if he was around," said Anne. Tritonio suddenly snapped back to reality with what Anne said. "Sacre bleu! A boyfriend?! It wouldn't happen to be Mr. Whiz Kid, would it?"

"As a matter of fact, it is," replied Anne. Tritonio looked to his sundial and realized the caravan was coming soon. "It is almost time! The

caravan will be arriving in just a few minutes." The gang of newts, Anne, and Sprig set off to put their plan into action.

Meanwhile, back in the caves, Darrel and Tint wake up from the moon's dust effects. They find themselves in an ancient cave, and inside were the other salamanders living and thriving in the dark. Thanks to their climate conditions, their eyes gave a milky appearance and their skins were moist.

"Where are we?" Tint asked. The two had spears in their faces as a response. "I don't know," replied Darrel. "But these guys do not look friendly." "Then let's give them a glimpse at what we can do."

Tint got up and created a ball of light, which made the native salamanders turn away in fear of bright lights. Then, a brighter light appeared from one of the native's huts. This hut was much bigger than the others. Darrel quickly assumed it was their leader's hut.

The natives escorted the two to the leader's hut. Inside was an elderly salamander, as old as Cronaxx. She wore purple robes, and her skin was dark brown with light green spots. She sat like she was meditating, and saw Darrel and Tint enter her hut. She gestures to her people to leave them, and she casts fire balls to light the room. Darrel and Tint were most fascinated.

"She's the master of the Arcane arts," said Darrel. "Can you believe it, Tint?" "Actually, I can," he replied. The chieftess was shocked at hearing Tint's name, so she decided to approach the two travelers. She waved her hand, showing a magical aura surrounding Tint. His aura glowed orange, which made the chieftess cry a bit. She points to herself, revealing her magical aura to be orange as well.

"Tint? Could it be?" asked the chieftess. "I never thought I'd see you in person." Tint was most confused. "Should I know you?" The chieftess shook her head. "No, you weren't even born." The next thing she said shook Tint to the core. "But the family never forgets. Not even the sister of your old teacher." Tint whimpered the next

words coming out of his mouth, "Great Aunt Alexphia?" Darrel was as surprised as Tint was.

Back at the caravan, two mind-controlled snakes were pulling the caravan. Anne and Sprig run in front of the caravan, stopping it in its tracks. "Hey slime-for-brains," Sprig called out. "The dumb-dumb convention is two miles that way."

"That is so rude," said the driver. "Guards!" The snakes hiss at the two and give chase into the forest. As they left, Tritonio's gang surprised the driver. They knock him out and signal Tritonio that it's all clear. Tritonio shoots his arrows at the locks, and the gang opens it. But when they looked inside, they found a squad of robots waiting for them.

"It's a stage," cried Little Louise. The robots grab the gang, except for Tritonio. He watches them get beaten up and take them away in the stage coach. Anne and Sprig fend off the snakes, but know what just happened. "Tritonio, you have to help them," said Anne. Tritonio looked back at the coach and sighed in defeat. "Farewell my friends." He takes his leave, leaving Anne and Sprig disappointed. They finish off the snakes, break free from their mind control collars, and retreat back to camp.

Back in the caves, Tint had his head wrapped with a lot of questions. "Aunt Alexphia? You've been here all this time? You're in charge of this tribe?" Alexphia stopped Tint in his tracks and answered as many questions as she could. "Yes, I've been here for hundreds of years, and the tribe found me, accepted me and I worked my way up to be chieftess."

"This is great," said Darrel. "Because we need all the help we can get. The resistance needs more fighters against the king, and-" Alexphia raised her hand to stop Darrel from talking. "I'm afraid there's not much I can do."

"Why not?" Tint asked. "We need your help." Alexphia smiled, "Because I'm not built to fight. I'm on my last legs and the tribe must

follow a leader. According to tradition, the chief or chieftess must pass down their role to the next in line. I can't fight in the resistance, but you can."

"You're saying that Tint gets to be chief of this tribe, they'll follow him wherever he goes?" Darrel asked. "Exactly," said Alexphia. "But, I worked my way to be chieftess. That means Tint will have to as well." Tint looked down to his hands and thought of Cronaxx's greatest lesson. 'A wizard knows no such word.'

Tint looks back to Alexphia and says, "What do I have to do?" "You must take the Trials of the Night Salamanders." She claps her hand twice and escorts Tint to the start of his journey. Darrel stayed behind because this journey was Tint's and his alone. "So, Burning Star. Would you like some tea?" Darrel turned in surprise. "You know the prophecy?"

Back at Tritonio's camp, Tritonio was seen packing up as much as he could and leaving everything else behind. Anne and Sprig try once more to convince him to save his group. "Tritonio! Come on, we can still save them!"

"And risk capture ourselves? No can do kids," said Tritonio. "The rules of the streets, remember? No attachments, no regrets." Tritonio's eyes tell a different story. He wanted to help them, but he stuck to his guts.

"But what about the resistance?" Sprig asked. "Oh come on Sprig, you know I wasn't going to do that!" said Tritonio. Then he turns tail and walks away. But the next thing he knew was that his family sword came flying past his head and hit the tree.

"Dios mio!" He turns to find an angry Anne, standing against his decision to run away. "Look dude. If you want to abandon your friends who you clearly adore, that's your call. But it kills me to see you leave like this. And I get it, you grew up on your own. We do what we need to do to survive. But for a master thief, I gotta say I'm disappointed in you."

"How so?" Tritonio asked. Anne replied, "You're leaving the best loot in the world on the table. Friendship, comrades, someone you can count on. By throwing those things away, you're only robbing yourself."

Anne gives a drawing of Tritonio, made by the young Jo Jo, and he starts to cry again. "Come on Sprig," said Anne. "We have a very merry band to save." She takes her sword back and they make their way to the captured newts. "Right behind you," said Sprig.

Back in the caves, Tint started the Trials of the Night Salamanders. Darrel was in the throne room drinking herbal tea with Alexphia. "I have faith that he's going to pass the trails," he said. "Of course he will," said Alexphia. "I was going to pass down the tribe to him anyway. The trails are just for show." The two laughed and remained silent for a bit. "So, how come Cronaxx hasn't talked about you?" he asked. "I heard Tint mention you once, while I was sick. But that was it."

Alexphia sighed, "Let's just say we weren't always seeing eye to eye." Darrel listened carefully. "But it didn't change the fact that we were still family. When we were young, we trained side by side together." She creates a memory orb and shows Darrel a younger version of herself and Cronaxx.

"We were inseparable, powerful, and the best. But Cronaxx took pity with our brother Cyrus. He didn't have magical abilities, so he took time to find other ways to be as special as us. Cronaxx believed he was as special as we were, he just needed a special push. When he found his place making technological advances, I was impressed. But the more time Cyrus made inventions, the more time Cronaxx spent with him."

"I soon discovered the Eternal Staff in the wizard archives." Darrel shows her the staff, "You mean this thing?" Alexphia was surprised, and amazed. "Where did you find it?" she asked. "Out in the marshlands," replied Darrel. "It was sticking out of a mushroom and

the whispers told me to take it. I grabbed the staff and that's how I got magical abilities."

"There's something you need to know about the Staff," said Alexphia. "That staff was made by the first wizard in all of Amphibia: Elim the Eternal. They were the first Olm to unlock the secrets of magic in the world of Amphibia. To keep his discoveries under control, he harnessed their powers and contained them into a large crystal. The magic thrived on the collective emotions of all they stand before it. Elim was the one who shared its glory to the people."

"As they grew together, the magic developed their consciousness on its own. But then one day, a powerful king wanted all that power to himself. He wanted eternal life, but Elim, as the king's appointed grand wizard, warned him that that kind of power would destroy all he swore to protect. They planned on the king's betrayal, so they sealed away their soul in the staff and it disappeared."

Darrel was most amazed, "Wow, that's amazing. No wonder I could hear the whispers. They were calling to me..." "Because he knew you were one of the four stars the prophecy spoke of," finished Alexphia. "You were worthy of their staff because of your heart."

Just as Alexphia finished her vision orb, she suddenly jolts and falls on her back. "Alexphia!" cried Darrel. She started breathing heavily, "Tint's finished his trials. Bring him to me."

On the surface, Tritonio's gang was brought up to a robot judge who accused them of treason to the crown. Anne and Sprig spring into action and rescue the merry band of newts. Just as the robot judge looked like he was getting the upper hand, Tritonio swung in to save the day. Thanks to the combined efforts of the newts, they destroyed the robot and retreated back to camp.

Tint returns to Alexphia's hut victorious, only to find her slowly fading from life. "Aunt Alexphia," he said. "You can't die. I just found you." Alexphia slowly touched his hand, giving him reassurance. "Do not grieve," she said. "Soon, I shall be one with the magic of this world."

"Alexphia will always be with us," said a familiar voice. Cronaxx appeared from behind them in his ghost form. "Alexphia, I'm so sorry my dreams kept us apart." Alexphia smiled, "We're family. We have our destinies, our dreams, but nothing will change the fact that we're family. I have already forgiven you, and Cyrus."

Cronaxx nodded in acceptance, knowing his sister is at peace. "It is time," she whispered. "Darrel, keep that staff with you. All you need is in your heart. And Tint, my tribe is now your tribe." "I'm not ready," said Tint. "I have much to learn before being a leader." "You have everything you need," said Alexphia. "And you are never alone. You have friends who claim you as family. They will stand beside you, when you complete your final test."

"I'll do my best," said Tint. He smiled at Alexphia, who smiled back at him weakly. "I know you will," she whispered and slowly closed her eyes. Tint was sad, but didn't weep. He only knew his aunt in tales from his uncle, and only saw her once. "Goodbye, Aunt Alexphia."

Then, Alexphia's body vanished into thin air, and her spirit joined with Cronaxx. "Did you think I was going anywhere without my brother?" she laughed. "This isn't goodbye, unless the king is stopped."

Darrel and Tint smile. "We are at your service Tint Tormak," said the night guard. "What is our first move?" "Gather all the salamanders you have brought down here," said Tint. "We return to the surface by sundown."

Around nightfall, Darrel and Tint lead the group of salamanders to the resistance camp. The frogs were most surprised with their sudden arrival. But, they didn't protest, at the moment. Darrel and Tint watch them from afar and smile at their progress.

"Hey Darrel," cried Anne. "We got the newts to join our rebellion. And Tritonio is leader of the group." "Excellent," said Darrel. "We got the salamanders to join our cause as well. Let's go tell Sasha." The two

humans head to the ridge overlooking the camp, and find Sasha there.

"The Newts and Salamanders have agreed to join our fight against Andrias," Darrel told Sasha. "Tritonio is our top Newt Strategist," said Anne. "That's awesome, you two," said Sasha. "Now come follow me, Hop pop just found something really interesting."

They follow Sasha to Hop pop, who has found a mysterious door. "Oh there you are," said Hop pop. "So I got lost while looking for the bathroom, and found this strange looking door." The door is shown to have no handle, a gold P in the middle, and a mail slot below the letter.

"There's no telling what could be in there," said Sasha. "Trouble is we can't figure out how to open it." Cronaxx looks to the door and finds a strange imprint under the letter P. It looked like the letter L. 'No, it can't be,' he thought.

"That mail slot looks to be book sized," said Tint. "Sprig do you think..?" "Maybe," said Sprig. "Hop pop, have you tried sliding the family tome into it? The one that had the calamity box drawings inside?" "It's worth a shot," said Hop pop. "Let me go get it!"

Hop pop comes back and inserts the tome into the mail slot. Causing the door to open, revealing itself to be a small room. Locked and preserved for all time. With a few cobwebs here and there. Cronaxx was shocked with familiar senses.

"Cronaxx? Are you okay?" Darrel asked. "This was her room," he said. "This was Leif's room." "Who's Leif?" Sasha asked. "Sprig, Polly, and Hop pop's ancestor," replied Cronaxx. They find an envelope with a piece of paper inside. Sprig reveals to the group that the note is blank.

"Well this is disappointing," said Sasha. "It's not blank," said Cronaxx. "There's a hidden message in the note." "How do you know

that?" Sprig asked. "Because I've seen this trick before. We only need to obtain Andrias' glasses to see the message."

"Our family sure is mysterious," said Hop pop. Anne turns out of the room and calls for the others. "Come on guys. Let's get out of here and head to the cantina. I am starving." "I could go for some food now," said Darrel. "I would keep that paper safe if I were you," Cronaxx said to Sprig. Sprig nodded and stuffed it in his pocket. Then headed to the cantina with the others.

The next day, the group was having trouble with wild creatures that have been scavenging their food supplies and taking off what they could eat. The frogs had to come up with a plan to stop them once and for all.

They set up a trap for the creature and waited it out. "If this keeps up, we'll be out of food soon," said Sprig. "Dibs on eating Loggle." "You'll have to catch me first," said Loggle in response. "It's got to be a critter," said Soggy Joe. "With all the destruction of natural resources, the wildlife has been forced to find food from outside the forests."

Darrel hushes the group and senses something coming. A gust of wind passed the group, then the food stash was ripped open. The group gave chase, and Darrel called on Clipper to tackle it down. He takes the creature down next to a cave where the creature was supposedly going.

"Clipper must've taken it down at its lair," said Tint. The creature coughs up the bugs near the cave entrance. Darrel squints his eyes to get a better glimpse of the creature. "Clipper, stand down." Clipper crawls off the creature, and the creature turns around, showing itself.

Darrel gazed in shock, "No way." The creature reveals itself to be a Coastal Kill-a-Moth. And not just any Kill-a-Moth. "It can't be.."
"Domino 2!" Anne cried. Remembering the moments she had with Domino 2 made Anne feel choked up inside.

"I haven't seen her since she flew off months ago," said Anne. "What should I do? Should I approach her?" "Let's figure out why she's stealing our food," said Darrel. "She didn't steal it just to eat. She had more than she could consume in her mouth."

Darrel slowly approached the giant moth. "Domino 2?" The beast looked down at the wizard, and growled. Suddenly, Darrel heard beeps from a couple robots from above. And the robots ambushed Domino 2. She tried to fend them off, but they captured her and flew off.

"Domino 2! NO!" Anne cried. The robots take Domino 2 to an electric cage, not far from where they are. Darrel looks down at Anne and instantly hugs her. "We will get her back," he said. "Even if we have to do it ourselves, I promise."

Then, Clipper looks up to the cage, then flies after the robots. "Clipper! Don't! It's too dangerous!" Darrel cried. "Why did he leave?" "We'll find out when we get there," said Anne. Soggy Joe and Sprig were surprised, "What!?" "Anne, she's a vicious animal. Not your buddy," said Sprig.

"Domino 2 and I still have a connection," said Anne. "I can feel it." "And I get it," said Darrel. "I don't know what I'd do if Clipper gets caught again." "But she's been living in the wild for months," said Sprig.

Then, the two humans hear a strange noise coming from the cave. They go over to investigate, only to have cute reactions on their faces. They find a litter of Kill-a-pillars nesting in the cave. "Domino 2 has kittens," said Anne. "That might explain her excess of food in her mouth," said Darrel.

"Hey little cuties," said Anne as she offered them to crawl on her arms. "Now we gotta do something," said Darrel. "We gotta look after them until we can get Domino 2 back." "What!?" Sprig cried. "Absolutely not! I thought you would be against this, like what happened the last time!"

"That was before we knew Domino 2 was a mother," said Darrel. "It's just until we can free Domino 2 from her prison." Sprig and Soggy Joe weren't having it. "No way, no how. Not in a million years."

"Fine," said Darrel. "Then you leave me no choice. Anne?" Anne presents the kittens to Sprig and Soggy Joe. Soggy gives in in an instant, but Sprig holds his ground. But when Anne joins in on the cute look in their eyes, Sprig caves. "Fine!" He cried. "But I have a feeling the rest of camp isn't going to like this."

"They won't even be inside the camp," said Darrel. They'll be outside with someone to watch over them." "Don't be so dramatic," said Anne. "They're gonna love it."

But the camp didn't love it when they explained the situation. "It's just for a few minutes," said Darrel. "In and out before you even know it."

"What even are those things?" Sasha asked. "They're Coastal Kill-a-Pillars," said Tint. "Dangerous Amphibivores." "They're monsters," said Hop pop. "They're cute as can be. And once they transform into adults, they'll eat us all for breakfast!"

"I lost my Uncle Magnus to one of those things," said Grime. "Found his bones in a giant pellet." "Read the room, guys," said Polly. "This is a hard 'NO'." "Guys," said Anne. "I get your concern. But their mother is Domino 2. She was my baby precious, and she's been captured by Andrias' robots. All you gotta do is watch over these kittens for a couple of hours."

The group remains firm with their previous answer. Then, Darrel stepped in, "Come on guys! Anne has done so much for all of us. For all of you. Can't we just do this one thing for her?" Sprig steps in to back up Darrel. "It's just for a couple of hours, then we don't have to see them again."

The group gets a closer look at the kittens and eventually give in. "Fine, we'll do it," said Miss Croaker. "But you better hurry back

young lady." "Yeah," said Hop pop. "We don't want to take care of these little savages any longer than we have to."

"I'm more of a dog person," said Sasha. Then, one of the kittens jumps on Sasha's face, biting and scratching her. Until she ripped it off, showing claw marks. "Make it quick!" she commanded.

"We'll be back before you know it," said Darrel. "We'd get there quicker if Clipper hadn't flown off to the birdcage." "Still think this is a terrible idea," said Tint. "Then would you rather come with me to make sure Clipper doesn't get recaptured?" Darrel asked. "Sold on that," replied Tint. "Let's make tracks."

The four friends make their way to the mountaintop to see the prison close by. Darrel looks over and finds Clipper overlooking the cage. 'Why are you concerned about Domino 2?' he thought. "Another one of King Andrias' robot bases," said Anne.

"Looks like they're using the moths to generate power," said Sprig. "And not just moths, dragonflies too." Darrel looks to see dragonflies flying alongside the moths. "No wonder Clipper came here," he said. "Some of his children must be inside."

"And look," said Anne. "Mind control collars." The two look closely and see that the moths and dragonflies are wearing the collars as well.

Then, an alarm goes off, then the moths instantly fall asleep. "Okay, what's the plan?" Tint asked. "We'll wait for the moths to fall asleep," said Anne. "Then, we sneak in and free my baby precious."

"Wouldn't it make sense if we freed them all?" Darrel asked. "I mean nature should not be treated like a cog in a machine." "Besides," said Sprig. "How are we going to find Domino-" "She's right there," Anne points to Domino 2's location. "Let's move."

The four sneak inside the cage, with Darrel and Tint breaking all the collars they can find. It wasn't an easy task since the moths and

dragonflies were asleep. But they managed to pull it off. There were only two more collars left to break. One on Domino 2 and one on a pink scaled dragonfly.

Darrel unsheathed his hidden blades, only for Clipper to bang on the cage, and wake up the moths and dragonflies. Domino 2 and the pink dragonfly shot straight up from their slumber and Anne and Darrel hung on for dear life. They break off the collars and the two humans fall in front of them.

Clipper squeezes his head into the cage, and gets in front of the pink dragonfly. Domino 2 stares down at Anne and rushes in to cuddle with her friend. Clipper nuzzles his head onto the pink dragonfly, then Darrel realizes something. "Clipper, that's your mate?! No wonder you were in a rush to get here. This was where they took her and separated you two." "But I thought she was gone," said Sprig. "Me too," said Tint. "But then again, Clipper was healed with magic. So Clipper's magical traces must've-"

"We don't need to go any further than that," said Darrel. "It's magic, that's all we know." Darrel goes to pet Clipper's mate. "You really gave my friend a bright future," he said. "Thank you." "So what should we call her?" Tint asked. "How about, Costa? She's got bright pink costa on her wings," replied Darrel.

Domino 2 takes out the toy mouse from its patch of fur and gives it back to Anne. "Domino 2, you didn't forget me," said a tearful Anne. She goes over to give Domino 2 a belly rub. "Alright," said Darrel. "Let's not celebrate until we're all out of here."

Darrel and Tint climb up onto Clipper, and Domino 2 lifts Anne and Sprig. "Hold on, Anne," said Darrel. "For what?" she asked. "I think Domino 2 is going to give you your first flight on her."

And with that, Domino 2 starts flying. She, along with the other moths fly around the cage. Clipper and Costa fly close together and Costa clicks her teeth to the dragonflies. "This is incredible," said Tint. "I know," said Darrel watching the moths and dragonflies. Anne,

Sprig, and Domino 2 fly around the cage, until Anne pushes down the lever that opens the gate.

"Darrel," said Anne. "The kill-a-moths are flying with Domino 2." "I know, and the dragonflies respond to Costa's command." "Almost as if..." "They're the leaders of their pack!" They said simultaneously. "So not only did Clipper get a mate," said Tint. "But he was chosen by the queen of dragonflies to be her king."

"Amazing," said Anne. "Marcy did say something about animals like this. If Domino 2 is the Alpha moth, then by taming Domino 2, we tamed them all." "Let's get them back to camp," said Darrel.

The moths and dragonflies reach the base camp, alerting the frogs looking after the kittens. "It's okay," said Darrel. "They're with us." "They are?" Sasha asked. "And with their help," said Tint. "We may have a way to reach Andrias' castle."

"We've got Air cavalry!" Sasha cried. The frogs cheered, until Sprig and Tint were halfway eaten by one of the moths. "Okay, but can we train them not to do that?!" Sprig cried. Darrel couldn't help but laugh at the last moment. Unaware that from this point on, things are going to get serious.

Equated Armies

Chapter 66 - Equated Armies

It's now a matter of time before Andrias begins his invasion. Thanks to their informants, Darrel, Sasha, and Anne know that now's the time to get all the amphibians together to fight back. The frogs, the newts, the toads, and the salamanders. This made Darrel think back to his favorite movie with all the armies into one battle.

In the center of the resistance camp, Sasha gathered all the frogs together. "Listen up," she said. "Our spies tell us that Andrias plans to invade Earth in just a few days. So it's time for the rebellion to mobilize!" The crowd of frogs cheered with determination.

"Which means," said Anne. "It's time for us to join our newt, toad, and salamander allies! Whooo!" That statement made Anne lose the crowd. The crowd stood silent. The silence did not make Cronaxx happy. 'I knew this would be difficult.'

"Did you say newts, toads, and salamanders coming here to work with us?" Wally asked. "Yeah," replied Sasha. "What's the problem?" Darrel gives off a scowl look at what they were going to say next.

"Historically," began Hop pop. "Frogs, newts, toads, and salamanders-" suddenly he was interrupted by Grime. "What Hop pop is trying to say is that things will be tense."

"Really?" Anne asked. "I mean Duckweed's a newt, Toadstool's a toad, and you two have been happily living in Wartwood for years." Duckweed and Toadstool were unsure of her statement. "Define happily," said Duckweed. "It definitely has its bumps," said Toadstool.

Sasha was furious, "I don't believe this! You're telling me we've spent all this time building this giant army, and there's a chance you guys

won't work together?!" Darrel shook his head in disappointment, "How can you hold a grudge for so long?"

"We're just saying," said Hop pop. "There's an extremely high possibility of that. Yes." Sasha was tense, and furious at the same time, she began to grind her teeth together. "What are we going to do now?" Darrel asked. "This is frustrating enough!"

Anne goes up to her friends, "Cheer up guys. You two are forgetting that I happen to be excellent at brokering peace between feuding factions." Sasha was confused, "Wha?" Darrel soon realizes something, "Oh yeah. Anne once brought the track team and the band geeks together one time to put on our school dance."

Darrel brings up a visual image of Anne pointing at the band mate and track girl shaking hands. Under the photo is a plaque that says 'Mediator of the year - Anne Boonchuy.' "Only award I ever gotten," said Anne.

"Oh yeah," said Sasha. "By pointing out they both value proper lung control." "Getting these guys together will be a cinch," said Anne. "You two will see. We just need to find connection points." "You better be right," said Sasha. "We don't have much time and a lot is riding on this."

"If they can't put aside their differences, especially with their world and our world at stake," said Darrel. "Then there won't ever be an Amphibia again." Then, Toadie comes out with news. "Madame Generals! Great Wizard! They're here!"

The three humans come out to greet the three oncoming armies. Beatrix and her toad battalion, Tritonio and his merry men, and Chief Nightoum and his nocturnal tribe. Nightoum was Alexphia's second-in-command, until Tint took over the tribe. Nightoum didn't protest, as long as no one in his tribe got hurt under Tint's watch. Despite being nocturnal salamanders, he could still see the surface as long as it was overcast.

"Beatrix, Tritonio, Nightoum, welcome," greeted Sasha. "Enough pleasantries," said Beatrix. "I agreed to fight alongside you frogs, but I draw the line at newts and salamanders. They'll steal your sword, or cast a spell behind your back."

"Only because you toads are too slow," said Tritonio. "And smelly I might add." "I don't believe in attacking an opponent in the back," said Nightoum. "There's no honor in that." "Ugh," groaned Beatrix. "Since when do you know about honor? You just hide underground like cowards!"

"Hey now," said Hop pop. "Come on everyone, let's at least try to get along." Nightoum places a hand on Hop pop's shoulder, "I'm willing to give it a try," he said. "Say Beatrix," said Tritonio. "Did you hear something just now?" "No," teased Beatrix. "Maybe a few smaller animals squeaking somewhere."

"Ignoring frogs now, eh?" Hop pop asked. "Typical," said Nightoum. "Even with the world at stake, we can't make an effort to get along. A snobby newt, a cautious frog, and a bully buff toad at each other's noses."

"That does it!" Beatrix cried. "This alliance is over!" "Toodles," said Tritonio. The two get back on their animals, preparing to leave. But Darrel freezes them in place. "Right now, this bickering is pointless," he cried. "Andrias is about to destroy our worlds and you're not even going to try to work together?"

"Let's just head down to the war room and talk strategy," said Sasha. "You're animals are not going anywhere, even if you still say no," said Darrel. "You're wasting your time," said Tritonio. "I mean, who can fix nine hundred years of conflict in a day?"

Anne clears her throat, getting the four's attention. "Who has two thumbs, and is a neutral arbitrator who fell out of the sky? This girl!" "It is true that she fell out of the sky," said Hop pop. "The idea does have merit," said Tritonio. "Fine," said Beatrix. "If Anne thinks she can moderate, we'll stay." "I was going to stay either way," said

Nightoum. "My people need to be underground." "We'll stay too," said Tritonio. "So will we," said Hop pop. "Hop pop, we live here," said Anne.

"Okay, let's start the healing," said Anne as she gives off an anime pose. The three armies enter the camp, leaving their weapons at the weapon checkpoint. Polly made sure everyone dropped off their weapons. "Weapon check! Leave a weapon, take a number," she said.

In the mission briefing room, Sasha, Anne, Darrel, Hop pop, Nightoum, Beatrix, Tritonio, and Grime were about to start going over plans. "Alright," said Sasha. "All of Andrias' power comes from the music box. So our best bet is to get it away from him."

Anne goes up to the chalkboard and writes spitballin'. "Alright friends. Any ideas? Remember, this is a safe space with chill vibes and good intentions." Beatrix raises her hand. "Alright Beatrix," said Darrel. "What's your idea?"

Tritonio scoffed, "Let me guess: You want to bash in the front door, beat up anyone you see, and take the music box?" Beatrix blushed in embarrassment, "Maybe." "Not bad," said Nightoum. "We can provide support underground, adding the element of surprise. We know the underground tunnels, thanks to those barbaric ants."

"Typical Toad and Salamander maneuvers," mocked Tritonio. "It will never work." "Tritonio," said Anne. "Let's keep it positive. All ideas are welcome here." "Even bad ones?" Tritonio asked. "Especially bad ones," replied Darrel. "You got something we could include?"

"Indeed," replied Tritonio. "I propose a more intelligent approach. We take a small strike force, dress them up as orphans, sneak past the guards, and steal the box." "I'm not confident that would succeed," said Sasha. "Andrias' security is top notch and I don't think orphans are going to trick a bunch of soulless robots."

"Hah!" Beatrix laughed. "Now who's bad ideas you cocky newt." "Beatrix, that's not helping," said Anne. Beatrix backed down in response. "So, Hop pop," said Darrel. "What kind of idea do you have to share at the table?"

Beatrix just laughed, "HA! A frog with a battle strategy?" "What is it?" Tritonio asked. "Do we paint a barn? Have a hoedown?!" The newt and toad laugh out loud. Only Nightoum and Hop pop glared at their reaction. Until Hop pop attacks Tritonio. Nightoum tackles Beatrix in an effort to stop the fight.

"Anne, this isn't working," said Sasha. "We need to do something." "You're right," said Anne. "It's time for *Team Building Exercises* !" "I'll gather all the amphibians together," said Darrel.

The amphibians get together, still keeping to themselves in specific groups. Anne, Sasha, and Darrel appear at the front, prepared for Anne's team building exercises. Darrel glared at the amphibians, expecting them to be on their best behavior.

"Okay folks, listen up," said Anne. "In order to defeat King Andrias and his robot hordes, we need to work together." The four factions still glare at each other, feeling like none of what they're expecting is going to work.

"First up is the mirror exercise," said Anne. "I learned this one at summer camp. Everyone, gather around in a circle and mimic my moves exactly." Anne gets into position, and Darrel and Sasha follow shortly after. Then the amphibians do the same thing.

"Excuse me," said Beatrix. "What's the point of this?" "If it's to make us all feel stupid, it's working," replied Tritonio. "This is all about harmony, people," replied Anne. She gets into another position and everyone follows though. Unfortunately, one of the toads loses balance and knocks down everyone like dominos.

So, Anne tried another approach, "Next up is the human knot. Or in this case, the human-frog-toad-newt-salamander knot. Try to

untangle yourselves while holding hands." The group of amphibians try to untangle, only to make things worse.

"Next up, the three-legged race," said Anne. She assigns various amphibians with one another to work as a team to win the race. Only for a newt to fall flat on their face with a frog, a toad to step on a salamander's tail, a frog to jump higher than a salamander, and a toad to slam his partner to the ground after crossing the finish line.

"My turn," said Darrel. He gets out a bag of marshmallows, tape, and thin sticks. "Get into groups of four, one amphibian from each faction, and try to make the tallest tower you can with the material you've got." The groups try as hard as possible, but no one cooperates.

Eventually, the four factions get fed up with each other. But Anne was not one to give up on them. "Next we have the trust fall," she said. A giant toad stands beside her, getting in position to fall. "This is the final step to knowing you'll have each other's backs out there. Now when I say go..."

"Go?" The toad misinterprets her signal and falls back. The amphibians below weren't ready for him to fall and get crushed below him. The amphibians proceed to argue and bicker with one another, once again. Eventually leading to another brawl againsts the four factions.

"This is not good, gals," said Darrel. "This is a total disaster," said Sasha. "They're fine," said Anne. "They're just blowing off steam. At least they don't have their weapons." But when one of the toad's got wind of weapons, they rearmed themselves, along with the newts, frogs, and salamanders.

The four armies were prepared to attack each other. "Newts, to me," cried Tritonio. "Toads! Battle formation!" Beatrix commanded. "Come on frogs," said Hop pop. "Do the best you can!" "Salamanders, be ready!" Nightoum shouted.

Seeing that there's no getting through to them, Darrel and Anne activate their calamity powers. "ENOUGH!" They shouted. They slammed in the ground in front of the four armies. They stood in shock, until they were pushed back by the two powerful humans. "We said ENOUGH!" Anne and Darrel shouted.

"You all are complete idiots!" Darrel shouted. "All this time I thought I could solve your problems and heal this rift," said Anne. "But I was wrong, there is no quick fix. I can't solve this problem for you. Only you can."

"We are on the brink of catastrophic destruction and yet you chose to fight against yourselves," said Darrel. "I doubt you even know the main reason you all drifted apart. And don't give me the 'we're better than them,' 'we know better than them,' Those are not reasons! You all have one question to answer: With the world at stake, and all our lives in danger. How shall this day end? At each other's throats, or against a common enemy?"

The two power down from their calamity powers and leave for the mission room. "So when you're ready to work together and save the world, let me know," said Anne. "Until then, I am disgusted with every last one of you," said Darrel, following Anne and Sasha. All the four factions look at each other with guilt and hurt.

Back in the briefing room, Sasha was impressed with her friends. "Dang guys, you were total bosses out there," she said. Darrel smiled, "Sometimes, it takes tough love and a real eye opener to at least try to do something." Anne was crying, "I'm so sorry guys, I thought I could help b-b-b but-"

"Come here, girl," said Darrel. He gives Anne a hug, and Sasha joins in on the moment. "It's okay Anne." "He's right Boonchuy," said Sasha wrapping her arms around her hard working friend. "You did all you could. Now buck up soldier, we'll figure out a new plan." "You can't teach an old dog new tricks, unless the dog teaches itself," said Darrel.

So the three humans decide to go over a plan, until they are interrupted by the leading factions of the amphibians. They all have smiles on their faces, which made the human friends perk up a bit. "You guys done fighting?" Darrel asked.

"Yep," replied Beatrix. "And we came up with a plan." "Hopediah came to us and got us thinking," said Tritonio. "If Beatrix and Nightoum do their original plan, and attack Andiras' front door..." "We can draw the attention of his forces," said Nightoum. "And leave a window for a small group to sneak in the back door and steal the music box while they're distracted."

"What do you think?" They asked simultaneously. "I think that's perfect," said Sasha. Darrel perked up, remembering something. "That plan is just like the one from War of the Warlocks, my favorite movie!" "That's right," said Anne. "Marcy made us watch that every movie night."

"So, you came up with all this together?" Darrel asked. "I thought you hated each other," said Sasha with a grin. "Well, Anne and Darrel were right," said Tritonio. "We can't count on anyone else to solve our problems." "In the meantime," said Beatrix. "You helped us see that we really do want the same thing: To take our world back from that crazy king,"

"If that day were to end in our hands," said Nightoum. "Then it's to end with our world saved from evil." "We might not be able to forget the past," said Hop pop. "But if we work together, we might have a future." Darrel, Anne, and Sasha smile. "Alright," said Sasha. "Now, let's draw this game plan up and-"

Suddenly, a smash was heard coming from outside the briefing room. They turn to find Mother Olm had crawled through to find the resistance camp. "Great Saltwater Suzan!" Beatrix cried. "Hello young friends," said Mother Olm.

"Mother Olm!" Anne cried. "What are you doing here?" Sasha asked. "Is it urgent?" Darrel asked. "Indeed it is," replied Mother Olm. "I

have some very important news. It's Andrias. We olms can feel the tremors of his armies' movement. That information about him moving out in a few days was a lie. He plans to invade earth tonight!"

The humans, frogs, newts, toads, and salamanders were shocked at this information. Darrel reaffirms his grip on his staff. "It's now or never, girls," he said. "Looks like it's go time," said Anne. "You two ready?" "Ready as I'll ever be," replied Darrel. "You heard them," said Sasha. "Let's move out!" The four armies gather their weapons and armor and prepare to make their final stand against the tyrant king, Andrias.

"Is now a good time to mention that we've also allied with the army of mushroom zombies?" Sprig asked. "Let's give them a minute to warm up," said Tint. "Got it," said Sprig. And the group watches as the armies get ready.

Success is a Double Edged Sword

Amphibia

Chapter 67 - Success is a Double Edged Sword

- *Flashback*

Set possibly a month before the events, Sasha, Anne, Darrel, and Marcy were watching War of the Warlocks together. It was late and they wore their night gear. Sasha was looking at her phone, uninterested. Anne was eating popcorn, unaware of what's going on. And Darrel watched with excitement, even mouthing the words from his favorite movie.

"Your puny resistance stands no chance against my undead horde!" said the Lich King. Darrel grinned with how the movie was going. "I know what you're thinking," said Marcy, wearing a blanket cape. "The resistance stands no chance against the Lich King's undead horde." "Of course," said Darrel. "He just said that." "Totally," said Anne, glancing awkwardly away.

"But little do they know," said Marcy. "The whole battle is just a distraction so that our heroes can sneak into the castle and destroy the Crystal Crown of Tantamore." Darrel chuckled and shook his head, 'Typical Mar Mar,' he thought. "Whoa," said Sasha. "Spoiler alert!"

"Sorry, sorry," said Marcy. "It's such a good movie. And I get carried away." "Mar Mar I'm joking," said Sasha. "I don't actually care." Darrel frowned at the statement, feeling like that hurt Marcy. So he had to cheer her up quickly. "It's okay Marcy," he said. "I've seen this movie a dozen times myself. It's my favorite too."

"Whew," sighed Marcy. "At least I didn't ruin the second twist where it turns out-" To avoid any more spoiler alerts, Darrel throws Sasha's

pillow in Marcy's face. "But I know when not to spoil it any more!"

"Pillow fight!" cried Sasha and Anne. "Uh oh!" said Darrel. The three girls take turns throwing and whacking at each other while Darrel just jumps and dodges. In the end, the four friends fall to the floor laughing.

Marcy looks up to see the movie is still going. "Ooh, guys. Here comes my favorite part! Guys?" Marcy turns around to see Sasha and Anne falling asleep. Darrel rolled his eyes, "Of course." "You guys fell asleep, again," said Marcy, giving her cape blanket to her friends.

Darrel places his hand on Marcy's shoulder. "It's okay," he said. "You sure?" she asked. "It seemed like they're not interested in anything I like." "Then they don't know what they're missing," said Darrel. "Not everyone can like what you like, but that shouldn't stop you from expressing yourself. But the fact that they allow you to express yourself, makes me believe that they are good friends. Besides, this is my favorite part too." The two sit down and finish the movie together. "You really mean that Darrel?" Marcy asked. Darrel simply replied, "Dungeon buddies for life."

Marcy gives Darrel a quick hug, but then retreats back. "Sorry, I know you and Sasha are together, but I couldn't-" "We were dungeon buddies before I got with Sasha," said Darrel. "Nothing will ever change that." Marcy smiled, "You really are the best friend we could have." The two get back to their movie and they say, "You'll never defeat us Lich King, not when we have the power of friendship!"

- *Flashback Ends*

Back in the present, the Resistance is in the town square ready to go over their master plan. For they knew that once they show themselves, there's no going back underground. Sasha, Anne, and Darrel stand in front of the Wartwood statue going over their plan.

"Alright!" Anne announced. "Is everyone clear on the plan? Tritonio, Beatrix, Nightoum, and Croaker will lead a direct assault on the castle." "With the King's attention drawn," said Sasha. "Anne, Darrel, and I will infiltrate the castle, rescue Marcy, and steal the source of Andrias' power: The music box."

"Suit up and move out people!" Darrel announced. "Today, we give evil a big Fat WEDGIE!" The amphibians cheer on their leaders. "I wrote that line," Polly chuckled. "Oh really," said Hop pop. "Couldn't tell."

All the amphibians armor up, equip themselves, and prepare to march up to the castle of Newtopia. Anne, Darrel, Sasha, Grime, Tint, and the Plantars were in the stables getting ready to fly. "Andrias isn't going to know what hit him!" Sprig cried. "Anyone need to use the bathroom before this make or break mission?" Anne asked.

Sasha goes over to Grime, "Grimsey, I need a moment with Anne and Darrel. Can you ride with the Plantars?" "That's fine," said Grime. "Can I have your phone?" Sasha gives Grime her phone. "Sure, wait, why?" "Oh, I just put a playlist together of rad tunes to get me amped for the battle!" Sasha was so happy, "I'm so proud of you!"

(Ready As I'll Ever Be - Disney's Tangled Series)

(As the armies hike to the castle, Andrias was going over the monitors of recent sights of Planet Earth)

(Andrias)

Any moment now, My Lord!

Believe me I know, I've sunk pretty low

But whatever I've done, you deserved

(Darcy: I'm pleased)

I'm the bad guy, that's fine

It's no fault of mine and some justice at last will be served

(Darcy: More like Vengeance!)

Now it's time to step up or it's time to back down

And there's only one answer for me

And I'll stand up and fight 'cause I know that I'm right

And I'm ready, I'm ready, I'm ready

Ready as I'll ever be

(Back at the Four Armies, Sasha was riding on Domino 2 with Anne, Darrel was riding with Clipper, and their Amphibian friends were riding on Joe Sparrow)

(Sasha)

Now it's time to rise up or it's time to stand down

And the answer is easy to see

And I swear by the sword if you're in, get on board

Are you ready?

(Tint)

I'm ready

(Grime and The Armies)

We're ready (we're ready)

(Sasha)

Ready as I'll ever be

(Darrel looks over to his two best friends and imagines Marcy with them. He looks glum, knowing what they're going to face, but he flies beside them with a brave look.)

(Darrel)

Are you quite sure we can do this?

(Anne)

Together we will guarantee

(Darrel)

I'll make them hear me (now it's time to redeem or it's time to resolve)

(Sasha)

Prove they can trust me (and the outcome will hardly come free)

(Anne)

I'll save my home and family

(Tint)

Now the line's in the sand and our moment's at hand

And I'm ready

(Sasha)

I'm ready

(Darrel and Anne)

We're ready

(Andrias)

Ready as I'll ever be

(Andrias and Darcy look at the monitors, and Darcy grins with excitement for a brief second.)

Back at the marching armies, Sasha, Anne, and Darrel were flying above. Sasha needed to get something off her chest. "Guys, we need to talk about Marcy." "You're thinking about her too huh?" Anne asked. "Is this about what happens next if we succeed in this plan?" Darrel asked. "Yes," replied Sasha.

"She got us stuck here on purpose guys. I know she was freaking out about moving, but it's still super messed up." "Perhaps," said Darrel. "But we're all partially to blame. If Marcy hadn't told us about the box, if you didn't convince Anne to steal it, or if I just spoke up, none of this would've happened."

"Darrel's right," said Anne. "We've all made mistakes." "Exsqueeze me?" Sasha asked. "Do you guys remember how she used to make us watch her favorite movie, War of the Warlocks?" "Oh yeah," said Darrel. "You two immediately fall asleep before the ending." "It was a three hour movie," defended Sasha. "Well, it wasn't just the movie," said Darrel. "It was all her interests. Her dice games, her books, her fantasies, everything. I liked some of her interests, but not all of them."

"And in ignoring her interests," said Anne. "We might have ignored her needs too." "But what about Darrel's mom?" Sasha asked. "Didn't you see how upset he was when she brought him here?" "That was before Tint healed her," said Darrel. "If it weren't for Marcy, my mom wouldn't be sick like she was." Sasha was shocked, "Wait,

your mom got better?" she asked. "How?" Darrel just waved his hand showing a magical aura. "Of course," replied Sasha.

The three friends sighed, "All I'm saying is, even if we save Marcy. Can we really save this friendship?" "I don't know, but we have to try," said Anne. "And before we go any further," said Sasha. "Darrel, there's just one more thing that's been bugging me."

"What is it?" Darrel asked. "You said the next time we see Marcy, it won't be her. What did you mean by that? Do you know what happened to her?" Darrel looked with guilt, knowing that his response will scare them, maybe shock them. But Sasha stood firm, "Look, I don't care if you think that this will upset us or scar us. Just, no more secrets, no more dramatic reveals. Just tell us, please."

Darrel sighed the biggest sigh he's ever made, "Are you sure you want to know? Both of you?" Anne nodded exaggeratedly, "With everything at stake, and everything that's about to happen, I think it'd be good for all of us to be prepared for what's coming. No matter how much it'll suck to hear it. So, yeah, we're sure."

Darrel knew this was his second chance, no more secrets, no more dramatic reveals, except for this one. He's been afraid to receive whatever reaction he was going to get. But they assured him they'll understand as long as he tells them now.

"Marcy is not herself right now. Back on Earth, in one of my visions, Andrias took Marcy in the basement. And down there, I saw the Core. It had Marcy strapped down to a chair, and Andrias explained that the Core chooses not just anyone. But the best, the smartest, and the only one who could beat Andrias at Flipwart. And since Cronaxx's body disappeared, the Core chose Marcy to be their host. Now, she's under their control and they go by the name Darcy."

Anne and Sasha were shocked, taking in all that Darrel had said. "I don't believe this," said Anne. "I knew what you said before that the Core was bad. But I didn't think it would be this bad. Poor Marcy..." "Okay," said Sasha. "I still don't like what she did by getting us stuck

here. But I won't stand the fact that she's being used as a puppet against her will. We have to save her."

"Darrel," said Anne. "Is there any way we can save her without having to hurt her?" "Maybe," said Darrel. "Darcy did explain to Andrias that Marcy is locked somewhere in her mind. I could see what they were discussing through the Core's eyes. They may have used her memories as a way to keep her locked away. So if we get inside, we may have a chance to get her back."

Before Darrel could explain any further, the four armies came up to the borders of Newtopia. Battalions of robots were manufactured and ready for the invasion. Andrias was still looking at his monitors. Then a server bot comes up to offer him cider for the invasion.

"The preparations for the Earth invasion are complete you majesty," said the server bot. "Would you care for some sparkling cider before we begin?" Andrias was happy with the gesture, "Ooh, don't mind if I do."

Then, he hears a war horn from beyond the city limits. He sees the resistance coming from his window. "What have we here?" he said. "It looks like the worms have decided to make a final stand." Andrias grinned, knowing that the resistance would just be delaying the upcoming invasion.

The armies of Frogs, Newts, Toads, and Salamanders get ready to make their first move. The robots get into defensive positions, equipping themselves with their weapons. The faction leaders stood at the front lines, drawing their weapons. They all knew, it was now or never.

"People of Amphibia!" Croaker called out. "Are we gonna sit here and let the past steal our future?!" "NO!" cried the armies. "Well then, CHARGE!" All the frogs, Newts, Toads, Salamanders, Kill-a-moths, Dragonflies, and Olms ran down the slopes to do battle with the robot army. The robots at the front lines didn't get a chance to attack, and the armies did battle.

Andrias looked down, feeling a bit upset. He underestimated their spirit. "That's actually a pretty big army," he said. "Guess I better get down there." He takes the time to finish his cider before going into battle. "Ohh that's good," he said. "What is that? Raspberry?"

As the fight goes on, Sasha, Anne, and Darrel land on a spot next to the castle. The three get ready to infiltrate and take back the box. They hear music coming their way, and they see the Plantars, Grime, and Tint land with Joe Sparrow.

Sasha shushes them, "Shh! Stealth mission! Hello?" Grime turns off the phone immediately, "Right, sorry." "Okay," said Anne. "We get in, get the music box, and save Marcy, got it?" "Got it," said everyone.

Darrel turns to Clipper, Joe, and Domino 2. "If you three want to leave right now, I understand," he said. "This may be a one way trip." Darrel turns to the group and enters the castle. Joe, Domino 2, and Clipper just sit there, showing their answer.

Inside the castle halls, robots were patrolling the area. But the group were quiet enough to sneak past them. Along the way, Sasha starts to talk with Anne and Darrel again. "Okay, so let's say you're right, and we've been taking Marcy for granted. That doesn't change what she's done."

"It's not about what she did," said Anne. "It's about why she did it." "So I'm just supposed to forgive her?" Sasha asked. "Like it's easy?!" Darrel walks up slowly, wanting to speak his mind. "It isn't easy," he said.

"Sasha, after Marcy became Darcy, I was cut off from my magical abilities. At that time, all I could think about was Marcy, and how much we hurt each other. I was angry at her, but I was also angry at myself for allowing this to happen to her. And I couldn't forgive myself. I was a wreck, because I had all this guilt. And I tried pushing it down, but there was no hiding from myself. And all I wanted to do was sulk." Sasha was surprised at Darrel's past predicament.

"But thanks to Tint, I came to terms that I was justly angry at her, and that she needed my friendship. And soon, I overcame my negativity by learning to forgive myself. And I was rewarded with regaining my magical abilities." "What does all this mean?" Sasha asked.

"Forgiving yourself can be as challenging as forgiving others," said Darrel. "It's hard, and it takes time." "Believe me," said Anne as she approached Darrel's side, and looked at Hop pop giving them a thumbs up. "It's worth it. I mean just look at what the three of us have now." "We have you, our old friend, standing up with us to do the right thing instead of being selfish and using us," said Darrel.

Sasha was brought to tears with what they said. "Of course you both are right," she said. "You two are made for each other after all. Now let's save that loveable little nerd so we can make things right with her." "That's what we're talking about," said Anne. "Come on, the throne room is just up ahead." The three catch up to their amphibian friends and make their way to the throne room.

They open the doors to the corridor leading to the throne room and continue their progress. However, they get sidetracked when a couple of familiar faces jump down from above their heads. It was Lady Olivia and General Yunan, under the control of the collars. "Going..." "Somewhere?"

"Lady Olivia! Yunan! It's us!" Sprig cried. "You're wasting your breath boy," said Hop pop. "He's right," said Tint. "They're under mind control." The two newts position themselves for an attack and leap at Hop pop.

Hop pop screams, but Grime pushed him out of the way in the last second and blocked Yunan's blade. But Olivia jumped in and side swiped his legs, knocking him down. Sasha jumps in, saving Grime at the last second.

Back at the fight outside, the amphibians rallied against the robot army. They cooperated by using their special skills to make their attacks better. The Olms pop out of the ground and take care of the

bigger targets. Even the Moss man that Wally thought he saw, appeared to help him. "I told you he was real!" he cried.

Then, the armies get an even bigger surprise. Their tyrant king, Andrias jumps down to fight the resistance. He takes out his plasma sword, makes his entrance, and glances down at the armies. "Well don't stop on my account." "This is it!" Croaker shouted. "Charge!" The four armies give all they have to stand against the evil king.

Back in the castle, the group was not having any luck fighting against Olivia and Yunan. "They're too in sync," said Polly. "We can't land a hit." "They're not the only ones who are in sync," said Anne. "Sasha, remember that super dance fusion routine we always used to do?" Sasha smiled, "How could I forget?" "And how could I?" Darrel asked. "Considering I was your cameraman."

"Hit it Grime," said Sasha, snapping her fingers. Grime takes a moment to find their song on her phone, until he finds it. The song starts pumping, giving Sasha and Anne time to get in sync with the music.

As Olivia and Yunan attack them again, The two humans taunt them then attack as well. And their dance routine works well with their fight. They jumped, dodged, and landed blows the same way Olivia and Yunan would do as they worked as one. They give the newts a push back, causing them to skid. They interlock their hands and dodge them again. Then, with a synchronized spin, they get enough force to land a double kick on the newts' collars. They finish the fight with a dance pose and Olivia and Yunan's collars break off.

"Well done ladies," said Darrel. Olivia and Yunan snap free from their mind control. "Wha-what happened?" Olivia asked. "Where are we?" said Yunan. "Long story," said Tint. "No time to explain."

"He's right," said Anne. "We're here for the music box." "And Marcy," said Sasha. The three humans race to the door, but the two newts stop them. "No wait," "Marcy has changed. She's no longer the girl you knew."

Darrel turns to Olivia and Yunan. "We know," he said. "I saw what happened to her." "How did you know?" Olivia asked. "Magic," replied Tint. "Anything's possible." "Besides," said Darrel. "We're not the same people we were either." He turns back to the door and takes a deep breath. "I'm ready to face them."

The three humans open the door and see the music box in plain sight. The rest of the room was pitch dark. But that didn't matter to them, just their mission. "Something's not right," said Darrel. "I don't see Marcy," said Anne. "First thing's first," said Sasha. "Get the box."

They walk over to the box, just inches away from taking it away from Andiras. "I can't believe it," said Anne. "It's over. We've won." Darrel takes a glance around the room for a brief moment to try and process the situation. Then, he recalls what he said back in the air with Sasha and Anne. 'They may have used her memories to keep her locked away.' His statement echoed in his mind over and over. Until he realized something very bad.

"Wait! Stop!" he cried. "It's a Trap!" At the last second, Anne touches the music box, only to realize that it was a hologram. "What!?" The entire room goes dark, then glowing eyes start appearing on the walls. Those eyes shot tentacles across the room and grabbed Sasha, Anne and Darrel. Darrel drops his staff in the process. The rest of the group get tangled up as well.

More glowing eyes filled up the room, until there was a small patch of darkness facing the group. Darrel at that point knew that this would be their dramatic entrance. "Darcy," he growled. One giant eye glowed in front of them, revealing the monster controlling their friend, carrying the calamity box. "Hello humans," they said.

"Nice of you to fall for our trap." "What is she wearing?" Anne asked. "Not she," said Darrel. "They." "Indeed," said Darcy. "We are a collection of Amphibia's-" "Amphibia's greatest minds, uploaded into one unified conscious," finished Darrel. "I already gave them that piece of information."

Darcy chuckled, "Hahahaha. Of course, leave it up to the nosy so-called wizard to ruin everything," "You're one to talk," said Darrel. "You nosed your way into Marcy's memories, knowing that this was exactly like War of the Warlocks." Darcy just chuckled even more, "Very cute."

"Give us our friend!" Sasha demanded. "Or I'll rip that helmet off and take her back!" Darcy just smirked, "Your friend? Don't be silly. You're not friends, not anymore. And examining Marcy's memories, it's doubtful you ever were."

Darcy then glances at Darrel, "But for the wizard's case, hehe. We examined them and she thought it could be more than that. It was hilarious for us to see. All the same interests, all the time you four spent together. She had more fun with him than the rest of you. She really liked him for that."

The three humans were in shock, especially Darrel. "Marcy crushed on me?" he asked. "Darrel, don't listen to this thing!" Anne exclaimed. "Ahh, the famous Anne," said Darcy. "Dumber than a bag of rocks, and yet somehow, this rebellion's last hope."

Darcy looks down and picks up Darrel's staff. "At last! The most powerful relic in the world." "You can't take that!" Darrel shouted. "And why not?" Darcy asked. "Wouldn't you like to know that out of all the minds we've collected, one of them happens to be the one who made this staff? Elim the Eternal?"

Darrel was shocked. "Of course, they refused," said Darcy. "And ran off. But in the end, we found them and made them a part of our consciousness. And now with the power of this staff, his soul is now complete. Ultimate power is ours!" Darrel shook his head, 'They're entirely clueless. that's not how magic works,' he thought.

"Oh, now I just remembered," said Darcy. They take the group to the balcony of the castle and look down at the resistance. "Frogs, Toads, Newts, and Salamanders of the Resistance," announced Darcy. "Your leaders have been captured! Your rebellion is over!"

"FALL BACK!" Darrel shouted. And the resistance does so. "There's nothing else we can do," said Tritonio. Andrias looks down at the retreating army, and grins, "Later Losers! I'd say you put up a good fight, but I'm not that good of an actor."

Andrias takes a giant leap back to the castle and lands on the balcony. Darcy and Andrias continue their plan to invade Earth. "Everything is ready my Lord," said Andrias. "The rebellion is in shambles and Earth is ripe for the taking."

"And all that's left is for us to do what you could not," said Darcy. "Kill Anne and Darrel." The group was shocked at what they were going to do. "It's been risky enough using the box until now. We don't know what will happen as long as they hold a piece of their power."

"I don't believe it," said Anne. "They're as clueless about the stone as we are." "It must be the magic within," said Darrel. "Of all the smartest minds in Amphibia, they fail to understand that one single subject."

Darcy throws Anne and Darrel to the floor. Then restrains them to avoid running away. "Let's make this quick," said Darcy. Holding a plasma dagger, they raise it up, preparing to slay the two humans. On the brink of death, Darrel had one more card to play.

"Wait! Hold on!" he cried. "Amusing," said Darcy. "You two wish to beg?" "I implore you to ask yourself something," said Darrel. "If you kill us, will the power of the stones return to the box?" "What if killing us extinguishes the power of the box all together?" Anne asked. "Ask yourself before you can kiss your invasion plans goodbye," said Darrel.

"Don't be ridiculous," said Andrias. "You think the Core haven't considered-?" "SHUT UP ANDRIAS!" Shouted Darcy. They shut their eyes, along with the others across the throne room. Darrel grinned for a second, knowing that his card was playing well.

"Well?" Darrel asked. Darcy opened up their eyes and said, "Unprecedented, we can not reach a consensus. Therefore, we must confirm the energy can be safely extracted before killing them." "That's what I thought," said Darrel.

"Did we seriously just outsmart you?" Anne asked. "You only bought enough time to watch your planet fall," replied Darcy. "We will look forward to dissecting you two, alive." They turn to their guards, "Guards! Have the rest of them fitted for collars immediately! Andrias, portal, now. It's time." Andrias does what he's told.

As Andrias opens up the portal, a robot guard takes the amphibians, and Sasha away for collars. The group gasps at their plan falling into place. The castle starts glowing bright lights of blue, red, green, and purple. Then, their device activates and opens the portal to Earth. The resistance below gasps in horror, and the robots all regroup at the castle, leaving the amphibians behind.

Back in Los Angeles, the citizens were going about their businesses. Until they start to feel the ground shake. At first they believed it was an earthquake, considering the fact they happen often in California. "Duck and Cover! It's a Big One!"

But the next thing they know, they see a bright light appear in the sky, then Andrias' castle comes out from the other side. Robots and factories follow behind, making the crowd scatter in fear. This was it, Andrias and Darcy have reached one of the first steps to world conquest, arriving on Earth.

Darrel watched in horror, breathing heavily at the outcome. They've passed the point of no return. "What have we done...?"

To Be Continued...

And with the last two episodes coming up, I've decided that the next chapter of my Amphibia story, will be my last. And throughout the third season of my story, I've created a secret message along the way. That message will be the the title of my

last chapter. I've worked on the message like Dana Terrace did with the Owl House. So pay attention to the chapter titles and figure out what the last chapter is going to say.

The Tale of the Four Stones (Part 1)

-Flashback

The day before Anne's birthday, all was going well in Saint James Middle School. Class periods were ending, which gave students a chance to walk to their next classes. As the students walked, or went to their lockers, the announcer went off. "Attention students, this is yet another reminder, that the pink powder inside the soap dispenser is not candy dust. So please-"

Out of nowhere, the PA speakers were hacked and a familiar voice echoed the hallways. "What's up SJMS!" Sasha cried out. "Instead of that boring stuff, how about an awesome K-Pop Dance Party?" Then the next thing that happened was that the lights went out and light beams were raging across the halls. The students cheered and danced the day away. They drop their papers and bags in the process.

Inside a janitor's closet, Anne, Darrel, and Marcy were inside with cages filled with dogs. "Great touch up on the lights, Darrel," said Marcy. "It's like you got the magic touch." Darrel shrugged, "Eh, I do what I can, whatever blends well with the environment." "Hey, do you guys think we should be doing this?" Anne asked. "Of course," replied Marcy. "It's not like anyone's getting hurt," said Darrel. "Unleash the puppies!" cried Marcy.

The next thing the school sees is a stampede of puppies. Most of the students race through the halls with the puppies, Sasha regroups with Darrel, Anne, and Marcy and the four dance the day away. Without a care in the world, they were having a blast. Marcy was so excited she threw a puppy in mid air.

The party raged on until the house lights were back up, stunning the four. The next thing they saw was the last thing they'd expected;

their school principal, "Waybright, Loyalitat, Wu, Boonchuy. My office, now!" "Oh crud," said Darrel. "Busted."

Outside the principal's office, Darrel and Anne showed deep concern about what to expect. Darrel was more scared than her, because he wasn't used to getting in trouble. He doesn't like to be yelled at by anyone, it makes him more of a disgrace to himself and his family.

He sees Sasha exit the office, looking like she went off easily. "All yours Marc," she said. Marcy waves at the three friends and enters the office. "How'd it go?" Darrel asked. "Was it bad?" Anne asked. "Nah," replied Sasha. "Mrs. Murphy just said she wished my leadership skills went towards something positive."

Darrel grows more anxious about this visit, "It's like you don't even care," he muttered to himself. "I've never gotten in trouble before." Sasha pats his back. "Relax Darrel Barrel, you'll just get a firm lecture and you'll be fine."

Just then, Marcy comes out of the office. She shrugs to her friends, symbolizing that it wasn't as bad as she thought. "What about you Marcy?" Darrel asked. "What did Mrs Murphy say?" "She was impressed with how I hacked the PA system and told me not to do it again," replied Marcy. "You're up next, Darrel."

Darrel was not feeling wiser for the wear. Despite the assurance from his friends, he hated himself for getting caught. "I'm telling ya," said Sasha. "There's nothing to worry about." Darrel gulped and slowly made his way into the principal's office. "See you all on the other side," he said. He opens the door, looks back at the girls, and then closes it behind him.

Inside the principal's office, Darrel shook quietly. Mrs Murphy could see this is something he wasn't used to. "Take a seat Darrel," she said. "I just want to talk to you." Darrel takes a deep breath and sits down. "I brought you in here because I'm worried about you."

Darrel looks up with curiosity, "Like me, specifically?" he asked. "Yes," said Mrs Murphy. "This is the first time I've asked to see you. I know Sasha's going to boss her way through life, Marcy will probably solve world hunger. Anne is bright, but I'll tell her that shortly."

Mrs Murphy takes out Darrel's files that show his transcripts from elementary school to now at Saint James. "I noticed a change in your grades when you started Saint James," she said. "You worked hard for yourself, but then they started going down. Then, you started making all these holographic pranks with your visual effects. You're a very creative boy, Darrel. But something is bothering you. Why the sudden change in behavior?"

Darrel wanted to find a way to explain to Mrs Murphy, but he didn't have the words to describe it. "I... I..." Mrs Murphy was most concerned. Until she remembered something. "Is it because of your mother's condition?" she asked.

Darrel perked up, most surprised that she was informed about Sarah's cancer. "How did you know that?" he asked. "She told me," Mrs Murphy replied. "And she was aware of how much it's affecting you."

Darrel sulked back into his seat, "I just wish there was something I could do," he said. "I don't want to lose her." "It's alright to be concerned for your mother," said Mrs Murphy. "But don't you think your mother wouldn't want you to get in trouble with me? You're full of promise, Darrel. But you need to start worrying about yourself if you want to succeed in life. You worry too much about others that you're failing to see that you're hurting yourself."

Darrel looks at his hands and can see the imprints on his hands. His fingernails made clear marks from gripping too tightly from time to time. He knows that Mrs Murphy is right, and the pranks he helps pull were just a way to block the reality of his mom's situation.

"So you're saying I have to think for myself sometimes?" he asked. "Exactly," replied Mrs Murphy. "There comes a time when you have

to be loyal to your happiness. And that's what your mother would want from you."

Darrel wanted to smile, but he couldn't because he started to feel disgusted with himself. But he looked up to Mrs Murphy and nodded, "Okay, but it's not going to be easy." "Life is challenging," said Mrs Murphy. "But that's what builds our characters."

"Now let's be straight here. Did those three girls push you into this prank?" Darrel knew this would be his first test of loyalty to one's self. He may get an earful from Sasha, but he knew he would want to make his mom proud. He nods, "Mostly Sasha. Anne and I were pushed into this."

"I'd also like for you to write an essay on what you want to do in life, and what you're willing to do to make it happen," said Mrs Murphy. Darrel accepted, "Okay, Mrs Murphy. Did Sasha and Marcy get this assignment too?" "Nope," said Mrs Murphy. "But you are going to have to choose the type of person you're going to be. Never forget that."

Darrel looks down at the page Mrs Murphy handed to him. The title says, 'Who am I?' Darrel looks at the paper with determination and says, "Alright, I won't forget." "Good," said Mrs Murphy. "Now could you please send Anne in here?" Darrel nods, and leaves the office. "Alright Anne, you're next." "You okay, Darrel?" Anne asked. "If you girls don't mind, I'd like to be alone for the rest of the day. I'll see you tomorrow." And with that, Darrel steadily paced to his next class.

- *Flashback ends*

Back in the present, Anne, Darrel and the others were held captive in the dungeon. Shackled by reinforced plasma chains and spheres covering their hands and feet to prevent escaping. Clipper, Domino Two, and Joe Sparrow were cuffed on special occasions, considering they're animals.

"We've got to get out of here before Andrias annihilates Earth," said Sasha. "Darrel, can't you or Tint break free with your magic?" Hop pop asked. "We can't," said Tint. "These restraints are so strong that they're also impervious to magic." "Perhaps we need to use a little more force," said Grime. He tried to break free with his strength, but it wasn't enough. "I'm out of ideas."

"All is lost!" cried Yunan. "Don't panic," said Sprig. "I'm sure we can figure this out before the invasion starts." "Uh, Sprig," said Darrel. "The invasion is starting now."

"Primates of Earth!" Andrias announced. "We have arrived!" The crowds of Los Angeles gasped in horror as the castle of Newtopia hovered over the city. A visual projection of Andrias appears and continues his announcement. "Hello Earth. Congratulations on being conquered! I have good news and bad news. The good news? Your planet is rich in the resources we'll need to conquer more impressive worlds. The bad news? We'll need to destroy your civilization to get those resources."

The people of Los Angeles were scared out of their minds. "Omletes, broken eggs; you get it," said Andrias as he closed the projection screen. Inside the castle, Darcy prepares to start deploying their army. "Speaking of eggs, how about a show of force!" They push the red button and two egg capsules dive into the streets. The eggs burst open and two giant mind controlled herons start rampaging the streets.

The United States Army arrives on cue and uses their tanks to fire at the herons. The herons retaliated and used their wings to divert the missile strikes. Then, they change tactics and fire at the castle. Only to find a shield generator protecting the kingdom. The castle then deploys the army of Frogbots and gets ready to attack. The general was out of options, except for one. "Get me the phone."

On the other end of the line, a familiar face responded to the call, Mr X. He responded to the call from the general, "We're on it. Alright

you four..." He turns around to four heavily suited figures standing right behind them. "This is what we've been waiting for."

The group could hear the screams of the people outside and feel the quakes of the missiles striking the city. Darrel couldn't bear to hear it anymore. "We've got to get out of here! There's no time left!" he cried. "He's right," said Anne. "I've got this." She closes her eyes and focuses on channeling her calamity powers.

Sprig stops her, "Wait, Anne don't! Everytime you or Darrel use those powers they wipe you out." "Sprig is right," said Hop pop. "We need both of you in fighting shape right now." Anne sighed, "Good point. So what do we do?"

Darrel turns his attention to Frobo, and then gets an idea. "Polly," he said. "Can Frobo's eyes still shoot lasers?" "Of course he can," replied Polly. "Then we need him to cut our restraints so we can escape," said Tint. "Go for it Frobs," said Polly.

Frobo scans the area looking for a weak point, he finds one on the floor and uses his lasers to cut the surrounding area. At first that didn't do anything. But then, the floor gave away and the restraints were turned off.

Everyone was then falling from the castle at great heights. The shackles on their hands and feet suddenly break off by the freezing winds from the sky. "Woah," said Polly. "Darcy's RSSI level must have dropped below negative seventy dBms!" "Still not used to you being smart," said Sprig.

Darrel whistles Clipper to catch him and Tint, and the three succeed. Everyone else got on either Domino Two or Joe Sparrow. But as they got on, they splashed into a swimming pool on top of a building. The group caught their breath as they climbed up from the water. "We need to work on our timing," said Sasha.

The group hear the sound of the giant herons causing havoc on the town, and look at the disaster of what Andrias and Darcy have

unleashed. Grime, Olivia, and Yunan were most surprised. Considering that this is the first time they've arrived on Earth. "I don't believe it," said Grime. "So this is Earth," said Yunan. "It's very geometric," said Olivia.

"Oh great," said Anne. "Andrias brought some giant herons." Hop pop, Polly, and Sprig stood in shock and realization. "Those aren't just any giant herons," said Hop pop. "Those are *the* giant herons." Darrel gasped, "You mean..?"

"Those two?" "Attacked our parents?" Sprig and Polly asked. "I recognized them anywhere," said Hop pop. He remembers back to the day they attacked Wartwood. Hop pop watched in horror as they screeched and tore up the town.

"With their blood red eyes and razor sharp teeth. Those two have been terrorizing the valley for years. I arrived too late to save your parents. But not too late to fight back!" "Never thought you'd see them again?" Tint asked. "Nope," replied Hop pop. "Much less here."

The group hear a scream close by, the three humans spot a mother and child being surrounded by a few robots. "We need to get down there and help people," said Anne. "You've read my mind!" said Darrel. "Right behind you," said Sasha.

The three drop down and slice through the robots that were about to fire on them. "Get indoors, and stay hidden," said Darrel to the civilians. More robots come floating down, preparing to fire at them. Then, out of nowhere, an armored man comes sweeping down and pile driving on the floating robots. Then, a black van shows up and three more figures come out blasting at the robots. One comes out and treats the civilians for any injuries. It touches the girl's scrape and it heals instantly.

Darrel was curious, "Wait a minute." The four figures gather together and remove their helmets. Revealing to be the Loyalit and Boonchuy parents. "Anne! Darrel!" Anne and Darrel smile with

happiness and relief. "Mom? Dad?" Anne cried. "Woah," said Sasha. "Boonchuys? Loyalitats?"

The parents go to hug their specific children. "Hi Sasha," said Mrs Boonchuy. "Long time, no see." "Mrs Loyalitat, you're looking great," said Sasha. "Well let's just say, I won't need chemotherapy anymore," said Sarah. "Thanks to Tint and Darrel, I'm feeling good as new."

Sasha was surprised. "It's true," said Darrel. "Tint used his magical abilities to eradicate the cancer inside her pancreas. She's healthy as she was before." "Heya Boonchuys," said Hop pop. "Hi Loyalitats," said Tint. "Bet you weren't expecting to see us again so soon. And then some." Tint points to Grime, Olivia, and Yunan, who all wave hello.

"Actually, we kinda were," said Mr Boonchuy. The group turn to the van, and see Mr X rolling down his window. "Okay, okay," he said. "Let's take this party on the road." Darrel and Anne were shocked to see Mr X again after everything that's happened.

"Mr X! What are you doing here?" Anne asked. "It's okay," said Matthew. "He's with us." Then, two more people came out of the van. It was Jane and Amelia. "Darrel!" cried the sisters. "Get back in the van girls," said Sarah. "We've got work to do." The group gets in the van and makes tracks.

"Let's just say we've had a few weeks head start, thanks to these six," said Mr X. "We were gearing up, training up," said Mrs Boonchuy. "We also convinced the military we're not insane," said Mr Boonchuy. "Alright gang, enough chatter," said Mr X. "We need a base of operations so we can plan a counter attack. Something close by, but inconspicuous. Anyone know a heavily fortified prison-like structure?" Darrel, Sasha, and Anne smiled. "I know a place," said Darrel.

The group arrived at Saint James Middle School and set up their headquarters in the science labs. "I need time to set up some

equipment," said Mr X. "Anne, can you and your friends do recon?" Darrel saluted, "We're on it." "Make sure we weren't followed," said Mr X.

The amphibians turn on the television to watch the news about the invasion. "In a shocking turn of events, the city has found itself invaded by a talking lizard, his robot army, and a couple of giant angry waterfowl. But in other news, Crypto is up big. Let's do the numbers." "Typical LA," said Hop pop.

Polly looks over to the next room that is known as the robotics club. The room has loads of tools and equipment needed to get Frobo back on his technical feet. "Woah, what is that?" she asked. "That's the school's metal shop," replied Sarah. "Private schools, I'd tell ya," said Mr X. "Well, Frobo. Think it's time for an upgrade?" Frobo smiles with delight and the two race to the metal shop.

Mr and Mrs Boonchuy enter the science lab with two trays of food. "We brought some takeout from the restaurant," said Mrs Boonchuy. "Can't save the world on an empty stomach." Grime's stomach growled in response. "Wow, Mrs B," said Sprig. "You guys thought of everything." "Want to join, Grime?" asked Tint. "Their food is delicious." "I don't see why not," replied Grime as he took a plate of food. "But be careful that's very-" Grime bites down, then gets a fiery tingling sensation in his mouth. "Spicy," said Tint.

Out in the hallways, Darrel, Sasha, and Anne hear Grime's scream of agony. The three chuckled, as he continued screaming. "Sounds like Grime tried some of Anne's parents' food," said Sasha. "Sounds like he couldn't stand the heat," laughed Darrel.

Anne turns to find her locker not far from them. "Oh, hey my locker!" She opens the door only for piles of junk to fall on top of her. "Anything in there that'll help us take down a giant heron?" teased Sasha. "Unless you can bore them to death with overdue homework, I don't think so," said Darrel.

The three turn to see a blank piece of paper in Anne's locker. "Hey what's that?" Sasha asked. "That looks like an incomplete essay," said Darrel. "How do you know that?" Anne asked. Darrel takes out his piece of paper from his locker near Anne's. "Because I got the same one." "I almost forgot about this," said Anne. "Me too," said Darrel.

"Hey guys," said Sasha. "Do you really think we can do this? I mean that thing knows our every move, it's even taken Darrel's staff." "Darcy only knows the old us," said Anne. "Which means," said Darrel. "They have no idea what we're capable of. And besides, they may have my staff. But its powers will not answer them." Sasha laments about hearing what they used to be before Amphibia. "The old us, huh?"

Anne goes to her locker and takes out the photo of her and her three friends. "It's not who we were that matters, Sash," she said. "It's who we are now that counts." "Yesterday is history," said Darrel. "Tomorrow is a mystery. But today is a gift. That's why it's called the present." "Hang on, Marcy," said Anne. "We'll get you out of there."

Meanwhile, in the castle of Newtopia, and far beyond what lies inside Darcy's head. A virtually trapped Marcy was in a room filled with puzzles. She spent most of her time solving them on her own. All alone in a simulated world. "Man, I have lost track of time," she said. "Speaking of which, I have been here for ages. I'm starting to get a little worried."

Then out of nowhere, a simulated door appears in front of her. She slowly walks up to it and takes her hand on the handle. She turns it, and the door opens. Revealing on the other side, a giant library. Simulated newts were everywhere, reading books, and organizing shelves.

"Welcome, Marcy Wu," said a familiar low tone voice. Marcy turns her head to see none other than Andrias' father, King Aldrich. "My name is Aldrich, I'm here to welcome you to the Core's inner sanctum. You'll be the first human to join our ranks. A great honor."

Marcy was confused, "I don't understand. What's the Core? How did I get here? My memory is so fuzzy. Like big chunks of it are missing or something." "None of that matters, my dear," said Aldrich. "Behold." Aldrich changes the library to another simulation. One where Marcy was most fascinated with. She gasped in excitement, seeing the castle, a dragon flying by, and endless floating rocks in the sky.

"Woah, no way!" "We've seen your memories," said Aldrich. "We know your love of books, games. This is the fantasy world you've always dreamt of. And that's what the Core is, a place where dreams come true." Marcy tends to her head, trying to think about what's next. "Hmm, yet I can't help but feel like I'm forgetting something important."

"Yes," said Aldrich. "Your map." He gives her a map of her fantasy world and she smiles with glee. "You can't go on a fantasy adventure without one of these." "Right, of course," said Marcy. She jumps with glee, wanting to see more of her fantasy world. "Come on Aldrich. Let's dive in!" However, Aldrich and Marcy were unaware that they were being watched. Another hooded figure who stayed in the shadows and waited for the right moment.

Back at the school, Mr X was equipping their new recruits with blasters. Polly was finished fixing Frobo and introduced the group to Frobo 2.0. He was given a fresh coat of pink armor, and special features that make him look like a galactic samurai warrior. Everyone, including Mr X, were fascinated with the upgraded robot.

Everyone, except Sprig and Tint. Sprig takes out the letter he got from the secret room under their house, and shows it to him and Hop pop. "What'cha got there boy?" he asked. "It's the blank sheet of paper we found in that secret room," he replied. "It's somehow important, but Cronaxx said we need Andrias' glasses to read it." "We may not have time to get those glasses," said Tint. He points to the ruckus that's still going on in Los Angeles.

Sprig groaned, "The quicker we fix this mess, the quicker things can go back to normal." That statement made Hop pop and Tint very sad. Tint takes off his uncle's hat and sighs, "There's no going back." "What do you mean?" Sprig asked. "It'll be me and Anne, you and Darrel, all of us hanging out. Monster of the week stuff, yada yada yada."

"Sprig," said Hop pop. "Don't you think Anne and Darrel have to go back to their lives after all this?" "As much as it pains me to say it," said Tint. "Hop pop's right." He looks down at the hat, affirming his statement. "Things are bound to change, they always do." "Oh guys," said Sprig. "Anne will always be a big part of my life. Just like Darrel with you, Tint." Tint smiled sadly, "Yeah, I know."

"Okay, gather around everybody," said Anne. She, Darrel, and Sasha bring in a whiteboard with the next plan of attack. The group gathers around, to get a lay of what's going to happen next. "Here's what we're going to do," said Darrel. "Mr X, the Boonchuys, Jane, and Amelia will help me, Anne, Tint, and the Plantars fight the robots, the herons, and save as many civilians as we can."

"Meanwhile," said Sasha. "Grime, Olivia, Yunan, the Loylitat parents, and I will take Joe Sparrow up to infiltrate the castle. The box will be too heavily guarded, but Olivia thinks we can sneak in and turn off the forcefield protecting the castle." "And give you earthlings a fighting chance," said Grime with a jug of water by his side.

"Wait," said Cronaxx. "I'm coming with you Sasha." "What?" Tint gasped. "Why Uncle?" "To help save Marcy," replied Cronaxx. "If she's stuck inside her head, I'm going to infiltrate the hive mind of the Core and see if I can lend her a hand to help her."

"But Cronaxx," said Darrel. "What if you get stuck in there too? The Core is very powerful, and may find a way to keep you in there as well. You could lose your chance to cross over to the next life." Cronaxx smiles and gives his two wizards one final life lesson: "With the world at stake, the only thing of importance is that you complete your mission... no matter what you have to sacrifice... or who."

Tint and Darrel look down with sorrow. "Listen," said Cronaxx. "Draw strength from each other, and follow your hearts. It will never fail you." The two nod in agreement and smile with determination. "Alright everyone," said Anne. "Hands in!" The group places their hands in the center of their circle. "Let's do this!" The group cheered and got ready to fight again. Darrel, Sasha, and Anne hug for good luck. "Good luck out there." Anne said to Sasha. "See you two on the other side," said Sasha.

In the castle, Darcy controls the robots and the battleships like a regular personal computer game. They click and drag on the robots and click on the tanks signaling them to attack. "Oh we missed this," she laughed. Andrias looks down, looking glum at what he's done to Marcy. He could remember the day he first met her. She was so innocent, and cheerful, that she made him laugh for the first time in a thousand years. He allowed her to explore the kingdom, until he started talking with the Core, and his father.

He looks down at the pin Marcy had given him the moment they met. "Congratulations big guy," said Darcy. "After a thousand years, you've finally made amends." The two look over the destruction they're causing. "Ah, isn't this grand?" Darcy asked. "Who needs friends when you have everlasting power?" "Yes," replied Andrias in a gloomy tone. "It's everything I ever wanted.

Then, out of nowhere, the alarm was buzzing off, giving Andrias and Darcy some troubling faces. They turn to see Darrel and Anne flying and fighting against the robots. Darrel turns his attention to the two where he was being recorded. "Oh Darcy!" he cried. "You have a little pest control problem!" He takes his blade gauntlet and slices the camera offline. Darcy was not happy. "You're Kidding US!" Darcy cried. "They escaped?!" "Don't worry," said Andiras. "They'll never get by the herons."

Anne, Darrel, Sprig, and Tint ride on Clipper and Domino Two. Taking out any squad of robots that come their way. Then, the four come across a giant buff robot. Darrel and Anne jump onto its arm and slash through its head destroying it.

As they continue to fight off against the robots, the Plantars hear a screech not far from them. The screech was so familiar to them that they stood in fear. "It's them," said Hop pop. "The herons." "Those things got mom and dad?" Polly asked. The herons take notice of the frightful frogs, and Darrel, Anne and Tint send Frobo to rescue them.

In the sky, Joe Sparrow took the rest of the crew to the castle. They find an opening through one of the engines keeping the castle in the sky. They get past the shield and make their way into the castle. "Alright," said Sasha. "We get in, take out the forcefield, and get out. Cronaxx, do what you gotta do."

Cronaxx salutes and phases through the castle walls. Olivia guides the rest of the team to the shield generator. Unaware that a small group of cloak bots are watching them. Cronaxx goes through the castle and sadly comes across an old passage where his room used to be. He felt a wave of nostalgia hit him like a ton of bricks. But he had a mission to complete, and he kept going.

Back in Marcy's simulated fantasy, she and Aldrich were overlooking the castle from across the valley. "It's amazing, isn't it?" Aldrich asked. "It's what your heart has always desired." Aldrich gives her a flower, making her smile. "It sure is," replied Marcy.

"It's a little lonely though, no offense." Aldrich chuckled, "None taken. But if it's friends you want..." Aldrich reaches his arm out covering a piece of the landscape. As he pulls his arm back in, behind the cloak reveals her three human friends, Sasha, Anne, and Darrel.

"Hey, Mar Mar," they said unanimously. Marcy was overwhelmed with joy seeing them again. "Guys! Oh my gosh it's so good to see you!" She hugs her three friends, and cries for a moment. "I-I I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry for everything."

"Nevermind that, Mar Mar," said the simulated Sasha. "Do you like your new outfit?" asked the simulated Anne. "I conjured it up just for you," said the simulated Darrel. Marcy looks down to see herself

wearing a green ranger dress with a brown cloak. She looks to see her friends in fantasy clothing as well. Sasha, dressed in a red coat of armor. Anne, an adventurous shade of light blue, equipped with a sword, and her hair pulled back. And Darrel, dressed in a grayish blue wearing a wizard hat and carrying a white staff with a glowing sunstone.

"You guys look amazing," said Marcy. "This is everything I ever wanted." "Well don't wait up Mar Mar," said simulation Darrel. "Adventure awaits!" Marcy races off to her 'friends' and the mysterious figure watches them, and Aldrich from afar.

Back in Los Angeles, Darrel and Anne get the frogs together, who are still shaken up. "Are you guys okay?" Anne asked. "I don't think they are," said Tint. "They're frozen in fear." "I've never seen them like this," said Anne. "Sorry," said Hop pop. "We still have a tad bit of trauma left over from WHEN THESE HERONS DESTROYED OUR FAMILY!"

"Hop pop," said Tint. "Listen to me. I get what you're going through. I've lost family members myself. But we can't do this without you. I can't do this without you. Before and after I lost my uncle, you took me and Darrel in. When nobody else wanted us. We've overcome so much as one big family. And I know we can get through this too." Darrel smiled, "Tint's right. We're all in this together."

Suddenly Hop pop began to stutter. "Hop pop," said Darrel. "Slow down." "That trauma is really messing with his head," said Anne. "No! Look!" cried Hop pop. "The Boonchuys!" He points to Mr and Mrs Boonchuy fending off against the herons. Amelia and Jane were close to their side as well. "JANE! AMELIA!" Darrel cried.

The four take shelter in a nearby bus, until the herons ripped off the roof. "OH NO!" Anne cried. "NOT MY SISTERS!" Darrel shouted. Then, out of nowhere, Tint, the Plantars, and Frobo were coming at them full steam ahead with brave faces on them. "CHARGE!" they cried.

They grab the herons' attention. "If you think we're going to sit here for another second..." "... while you try to take away the only family we have left..." "... You've got another thing coming!" Darrel and Anne rescue their family members and fly off to somewhere safe.

The herons screech to attack the amphibians, but they fail to get a beakful. Instead, the Plantars, combined with Tint's magic, work together to destroy the two monstrous waterfowl. "There's a lesson to fighting huge enemies," said Tint. "The bigger they are..." "The harder they fall," said Hop pop.

The Plantars and Tint take a grappling hook from Frobo and wrap around one of the herons. They wrap the legs, and then wrap the wings to prevent them from flying. The heron lands on the other heron and the sudden impact destroys their collars.

The four amphibians soon go toe to toe with the giant predators of frogs. "We're not afraid of you anymore," said Sprig. "You may have taken something important from us," said Polly. "But you're not going to take anything else," said Tint. "Well kids," said Hop pop. "What do you say, we teach these monsters some manners? Tint, follow our lead."

Tint smiled, "I think I know what you're going for." The four get in position and the herons watch in curiosity. Soon the four began dancing around in sync. Darrel and Anne were happy to see what they're doing. "What are they dancing to?" Jane asked. "It's the Plantar family hunting dance," replied Darrel. "And Tint's joining them."

After the dance was completed, the herons were tamed, under their complete control. Polly commands them to destroy the robots, and the herons complied. They take to the skies and destroy the firing squads in the air. "Have you ever seen anything this beautiful?" Anne asked. "I already have," replied Darrel as he took her hand.

Inside the castle, Darcy was getting frustrated. They didn't want any more setbacks. "This has gone on long enough," they said. They

turn to Andiras, "Get out there and bring me those two worthless humans! Break their legs if you have to."

Andrias complied with Darcy's order and set off to face them. But before he could go further, Darcy stopped him. "Oh, and Andrias. If you fail, you can forget about ever joining your father and the rest of us up here." Darcy points to the Core's helmet, giving Andrias a more pressuring conviction. "Ready the Dyoplosaurus," Andrias said to a robot.

Just then, Cronaxx's spirit finds himself overlooking Darcy. He knew that it was now or never to try and save her from the inside. So when Darcy turned to find the group entering the shield generator, Cronaxx took his chance and risked his eternal peace, entering the Core's helmet. Darcy didn't feel a thing, but was too busy to notice the intruders were near their location.

Outside the hall, Olivia guided them to the ladder near the generator. "This'll take us to the hall just outside the shield generator." Suddenly, the group was ambushed by the cloak bots. They camouflaged out of sight, but Grime's slam with Barrel's warhammer, gave their location away.

"You four go on," said Yunan. "Olivia and I will handle these creepos." Matthew, Sarah, Grime, and Sasha make their way up the ladder and head to the shield generator. "I'm glad you're with me, general," said Olivia. "Likewise, m'lady," said Yunan.

Sasha, Grime, Matthew, and Sarah run down the hall and make their way to the shield generator. "This is it," said Matthew. "Watch yourselves," said Sarah. "It could be a trap." The group runs for it, only to be pushed back by a few mechanical tentacles. Sarah and Matthew get coiled up easily. Leaving only Sasha and Grime to come face to face with Darcy.

"Walking by without calling?" mocked Darcy. "So rude. Then again we're not surprised. Marcy always thought you were kind of a brute." "I know what you're trying to do," said Sasha as she drew her

swords. "And it won't work." "Yeah," said Grime. "You really think you can manipulate the Queen of Manipulation?" "Thank you Grime," said Sasha. "Ahem, sorry."

"Aw, don't you want to know what she really thinks of you?" Darcy asked. "We know what she thinks of Darrel. And quite frankly, we were bored with what we know." "It doesn't matter what she thinks of me," said Sasha. "I'm here to save her and stop you."

Standing firm in her fighting stance, Sasha prepares for any attack. Darcy adjusts her neck and takes another staff in hand. "Well then," The staff sheathes its blade to look like a scythe. "Let's rumble, girlfriend." Grime and Sasha lunge forward to attack Darcy. The three fighters collided their weapons together and kept a firm grip on their clash. Matthew and Sarah could only watch as the three fought.

Back in Los Angeles, Mr and Mrs Boonchuy worked well with Jane and Amelia fighting off the robots. Mr Boonchuy was most pleased with his power suit. "Hey X. When the battle's over, can we keep this stuff?" "That is proprietary government property Mr B," replied Mr X. "So that's a maybe?" Jane asked.

On top of a roof, Anne, Darrel, Tint and the Plantars took care of a few look out bots. And then, they see the castle hover closely above them. They see hatch doors open to reveal a giant mech jump out and onto the back tower, the tallest tower of Los Angeles. Darrel had a gut feeling it wasn't just a giant robot.

And he was right. "What's going, primates?!" Andrias laughed. "Andrias," said Anne. "Ten coppers I can snipe him from here," said Sprig with his slingshot. Andrias opens his mech helmet revealing his face to the city. "I gotta be honest," he said. "You've put up a pretty good fight. For a species as primitive as yours that is. And even though we could easily wipe you out, I'm willing to strike a little bargain. I'll call off this whole invasion, if Anne Boonchuy and Darrel Loyallitat beat me in single combat. That's it, no gimmicks. One life, for thousands. And if they don't..."

Andrias' castle fires the primary weapon and a blast destroys the Hollywood sign along with a chunk of mountain with it. The citizens were scared out of their minds, just thinking that their whole home could be wiped out with just a push of a button. Darrel and Anne weren't going to let that stand.

"You hear me kids!?" Andrias cried. "It's time for a rematch!" He dawns back his mech helmet and prepares to fight. Darrel and Anne glare at where Andrias stands. "I'm not going to let him hurt anyone any more," said Darrel. "Don't do it guys," said Tint. "It's a trap for sure," said Hop pop. "Perhaps," said Darrel. "But I can feel there's something off about him. I can't say for sure, but he's slipping. This way, no one else has to get hurt. Anne?"

Anne takes out her blank essay she kept in her pocket. "You know, before I ended up in Amphibia, I didn't care about right or wrong. I just did what was easy. I let people walk all over me. I think that's because I didn't love myself. Not really."

She turns to her friends, "But meeting you three, has changed all of that. And thanks to Darrel and Tint for guiding me, and all the months we've spent together, have shown me the person I really want to be." Darrel walks up and places a hand on his shoulder. "I just did what any wizard would do for his fellow companion: guide them from right and wrong. And the person you want to be, is someone I grew to love with. I want to stay by their side no matter what life throws at us."

He looks to glare at Andrias, "Trap or not, we must do this." The two humans were suddenly hugged by their amphibious companions. And Anne and Darrel returned one to them. "Then you better kick his big stupid butt," said Polly. "Couldn't have said it better myself," said Hop pop. "You guys got this," said Tint. "For Cronaxx," said Tint. "For Cronaxx, buddy," said Darrel. "Thanks you guys," said Anne.

The two call upon Domino Two and Clipper and they take them to the top of the bank tower. "Go Bro, Go!" Amelia cheered. "Take him

down!" Mrs Boonchuy cheered. 'Good luck, Darrel,' thought Tint. 'You can do it Anne,' thought Sprig.

The two landed in front of Andrias and stared up at their enemy. "You wanted us," said Darrel. "Here we are." "You rang?" Anne asked. "You know," said Andrias. I think I've finally figured out why the stones picked you two as their champions. From the moment you walked into my throne room, I underestimated you two. A scruffy little girl with one shoe and leaves in her hair. A timid little boy with a cape and twigs like antlers, along with a walking stick of a staff. Yet underneath it all, a true Warrior, a true Wizard. Such brilliant deceptions."

"When it comes to magic," said Darrel. "Looks can be deceiving, you dragon." "Exactly what he said," said Anne. "You went from Santa Clause to super villain pretty quick there." Andrias chuckled, "Touche. Oh, and I know about the time limit on your precious powers. Do you really think you can beat me before you pass out?"

"That depends," said Darrel as his eyes glowed red for a brief second. "Because in my favorite book; The Warrior, the Wizard, and the Dragon, the story ends with the enemy of one slain in combat. Depending on who wins that fight, is up to the fighters."

The whole town watches as the helicopters broadcast the three from a fair distance. Then, the two teens power up their calamity powers and take off. They take the first offensive attack, but Andrias counter attacks them and slams them against a few buildings. Then, he fires homing missiles at the pair. Darrel duplicates himself to confuse the missiles and they start flying everywhere. But that spell didn't confuse Andrias. He jumps through a cloud of smoke and punches the two to the ground.

Back in the castle, while Matthew and Sarah struggle to get in the fight, Sasha and Grime fought with all their might against Darcy. Darcy laughed as they twirled their scythe, clashing their weapon at the two warriors. Darcy then calls to one of the robotic tentacles and has it push them against the wall.

Grime knew that they couldn't keep up with the delay, so he made a plan. "I have an idea. You go for the generator, while I distract her!" Grime charges at Darcy with all his might. Giving off a battle cry, like any other warrior.

Sasha took this chance and made a run for the shield generator. But on the way, she was spotted by Darcy. "Oh no you don't." Darcy takes a plasma dagger and throws it at Sasha. "Sasha! Look out!" Sarah cried. But before she could turn around, the dagger hit her in the ankle. Sasha kneeled down in pain, unable to move.

Darcy jumps in and prepares to attack her. "Gotcha!" Sasha gazed in fear, knowing she was vulnerable. "NO! Sasha!" Grime lunged in front of her and pushed her out of the way. Just as Darcy took a swing with their weapon. Grime's vision went black in a moment of pain. Then, he saw his left arm fall to the ground. Detached from his body.

Sasha was sad to see her toad friend hurt. He falls in pain and exhaustion. "Grime, you big dummy!" Sasha cried. She takes her cloak and wraps his injury tight to stop the bleeding. Grime used the rest of his strength to talk to her. "Listen to me, Sasha," he whispered. "Before I met you I was nothing. Just a bully in a tower. But you, you inspired me to be so much more. And if you can do that, you can do anything. You can do this..." Grime then passes out from exhaustion.

"Oops, looks like he's disarmed," mocked Darcy. "Get it? Disarmed?" They laughed, showing no regret for their actions. Matthew and Sarah look to see Sasha gripping her swords tightly. 'Big mistake,' they thought.

Sasha shouted at the top of her lungs and attacked Darcy. She slammed her swords in front of them and wasted no breath. Darcy couldn't get a chance to attack, so they defended every slash of her swords. They tried to use their tentacles, but Sasha cut them with one strike. What they didn't know was that the tentacles they used

were also the ones holding Matthew and Sarah. Sarah goes over to Grime, and Matthew fends off more tentacles coming after them.

Back at the fight outside the castle, Anne and Darrel gave everything they've got against Andrias. Their collisions caused shockwaves across the city. "Why fight it, you two?" Andrias asked. "Everything you love will eventually crumble. Your world, your friendships, each other!"

"So what?" Anne asked. "We're supposed to give up? Stop feeling things? Like you?!" Anne lunges at Andrias, pushing him back. And Andrias pushes a button from his control stick, and plasma Olms come after the two humans.

"All I hear from you is just talk," said Darrel. He reaches out in the air, and the Eternal Staff is yanked from its holding cell. Darcy tried to reach for it, but Sasha grabbed their attention away from the staff. "But in the final accounting, where does all that talk get you?" Darrel asked as he grabbed his staff. "A futile quest for power?"

Darrel blasts at the plasma Olms causing them to disintegrate. "A thousand years of isolation, of pain and suffering? Burying your feelings? I pity you! Your place is no more than being your father's errand boy!" Andrias growled. "Enough!" He takes another swing and slams the two humans back on top of the bank tower.

The sudden impact causes both humans to lose connection with their calamity powers. "You have no right to say his name!" Andrias shouted "My father was one of the greatest kings in all of Amphibia! My father's crown has given me the role as the leader of the most powerful army in the known universe!"

"Come on guys," said Sprig down below. "If only we can let them know that we're all behind them." Suddenly, Tint gets an idea. He takes out Darrel's old video camera. "Mr X, can you help?"

Mr X smiled, "Behold!" He takes out a remote and pushes a button. "Your tax dollars at work!" The lamp posts turned into amps and

tuned to Anne and Darrel's favorite K-pop music. "Hey Anne, Darrel," said Mr X over the speakers. "Looks like you could use a little mood music. And a little birdie told me that this was your jam."

Tint gives X the video camera and broadcasts it across the monitors of the city. The Boonchuys, the Plantars, Tint, the Loyallat sisters, and the citizens of Los Angeles cheer for the two and chant their names. Their encouragement caused the two humans to reconnect with their calamity powers.

"Well hello there," said Anne. "Sweet life giving K-Pop." The two lunge at the giant and give it all they got. "You just have an army that has no loyalty, no spirit, just programming!" said Darrel. "What have you to show for all that power? What have you to gain?! I'll tell you, more isolation, more depression, and your curse is to live with what you've done!"

Back at the fight with Sasha and Darcy, Sasha gets a hit at Darcy. Causing them to get a cut on their cheek. "That was for Grime!" Sasha yelled. Then, Darcy pulls another trick up their sleeve. They create a smoke screen surrounding Sasha, and show her the heads of Darrel, Anne, and Marcy. "You think these cheap tricks will work on me?!" Sasha asked.

"Yep," replied Darcy. She appears from behind and slashes her in the back. Causing a scar to appear from her back. "Oh, too easy!" laughed Darcy. Just then, Darcy gets punched by Matthew. "Don't forget about me," he said. "I haven't," said Darcy as they charged at him.

Back inside Marcy's fantasy, she was having a blast. Seeing her friends, going on the adventure of her life, and not having any problems at all. "Okay, so, should we tackle the Marsh of the Mystery first or the Cavern of Courage?" Then, she hears another familiar voice. "Marcy!" "Huh?"

Marcy turns her head to see Cronaxx racing up to her. "Cronaxx! It's so good to see you," she said. "Marcy, you need to listen to me."

"Hold that thought. We can talk when we start our journey," said Marcy as she turned away. "So, where will we go first, guys?"

"Whatever you want, Mar Mar," replied the three simulated humans. "We only want what you want." Marcy smiled at their response. But then, she started having weird vibes. It's as if something in her mind is off, that something is wrong in a place that's right for her. She caught glimpses in her mind back to the day when Andrias revealed the truth.

She rubbed her eyes and asked them, "What did you just say?" "We want what you want," said simulated Sasha and Anne. "Always and forever." Simulated Darrel simply walked up to her and placed his hand on her cheek. "No matter what," he said. "We'll always be together. You and me."

All Marcy could feel on her cheek was not a warm hand, but a cold breeze. Her cheeks weren't flustered, but it made her feel sad. Then, she looked down to see that her map, changed into a photo of her and her friends.

Cronaxx watched from behind and sighed, "Marcy?" Marcy started crying, knowing in her heart that what's standing in front of them, are not her friends. "Cronaxx?" She asked. "This isn't real is it?"

Cronaxx shook his head, "I'm sorry Marcy. I'm not even alive." Marcy reaches out to touch Cronaxx, only to have her hand phase through it. "My spirit is real, but I was slain by Andrias a long time ago."

Marcy looks back to her photo, "The real Darrel, Anne, and Sasha, don't want what I want. And it hurts. But forcing them to follow my dreams, and forcing Darrel to like me back, is wrong. I love Darrel, but he's not mine. And I hurt him, and his family. I learned that the hard way."

Cronaxx walked up to her face, "But Darrel cared enough to let you express yourself, as a true friend." His statement made Marcy's eyes water up. "He never gave up on you, so don't give up on him."

Then, the two hear a low growl from Marcy's back. Cronaxx stood in shock, seeing the last person he wanted to see. King Aldrich, the king who killed his brother, Cyrus. "This is getting tiresome Marcy," said Aldrich. "We gave you your silly games, and your idiotic little friends. It's time for you to be assimilated into the Core. Now!"

Cronaxx used his magic to counteract Aldrich. "Not today, Tyrant!" He shouted. "Cronaxx," said Aldrich. "It's a surprise you've decided to join us into the Core." "I'd never join you," said Cronaxx. "You killed my brother, Cyrus. That wasn't an accident. You lied to me."

"Your pathetic brother wanted to destroy everything we worked hard for," said Aldrich. "I've learned this much; take what you can, when you can." "Then you've learned nothing," said Cronaxx. "Join us Marcy!" Aldrich cried.

Marcy smacked Aldrich's hand, giving a bright yellow glow. "No!" She cried. "Only a coward would hide away in this place. Well I reject this sick fantasy, and I reject you!" She takes her photo of her friends and Cronaxx gives off a light spell. Pushing Aldrich back. They get a good glimpse of Aldrich's eyes, which are the same as the Core's.

"You fool!" Aldrich cried. "The only thing waiting for you out there is rejection and misery! Even if your friends win, your parents will still tear the four of you apart." Marcy looks down and remembers one statement Darrel said to her, 'We're Dungeon buddies for life, no matter what.'

"I started this whole mess because I wanted to escape that reality," said Marcy. "But I won't run away from it anymore!" "It's over, Aldrich," said Cronaxx. "You've lost. The cycle is broken." Aldrich stares down at the two. "So be it," he said. "Then suffer you two, in eternal darkness! And anything left of her personality will fade away."

Aldrich turns off Marcy's simulation leaving her and Cronaxx in a giant void of darkness. But then the mysterious figure appears alongside them, giving them a surrounding light form where they stand. "Who's that?" Marcy asked.

The figure removes his hood, revealing an old Olm, smiling at the two. Cronaxx immediately perked up seeing his face. "That's Elim the Eternal: The first wizard in Amphibia." Elim nodded, not saying a word, and kept the two safe.

Marcy looks down at her photo and hugs it tightly. "Anne, Sasha, Darrel, I believe in you." "I won't leave your side," said Cronaxx. "No one like you deserves to stay in eternal darkness."

Back in Los Angeles, Anne and Darrel continued to swing punches, magical blasts and pin him down back on top of the bank tower. Darrel and Anne glare down at the fallen king. "It's OVER!" Darrel shouted. "Call off the invasion!" Anne ordered.

Andrias wasn't bound to give up so easily, but luck was soon on his side. Darrel and Anne's calamity powers were about to run out. Andrias grins, "Times up. Looks like your powers are finally running out."

"Oh no," said Anne. The two humans lose their powers and fall with little energy they have left. "It's over," said Andrias. "And you were so close too." "Like heck it is," said Anne trying to land another punch. But Andrias grabs her by her fist. Darrel jumps up and tries to attack with his staff.

But before he could conjure up any more magic, Andrias slams his fist down on the human boy. The sudden impact caused the gem on the staff to crack, and push Darrel back down, giving him a black eye. Andrias then throws an exhausted Anne down next to Darrel.

The town gasped at the development. Tint and the Plantars most of all. "Anne, Darrel, Oh no!" cried Hop pop. "We have to help them!" Polly shouted. Sprig looks around his pockets trying to find anything to help his friends.

Then, the letter falls out of his pocket and Mr X picks it up. His special glasses read the hidden message and decode it in front of him. "This is a letter to Andrias," he said. "This letter is encoded with

special ink that's only visible with red lenses." Tint and the Plantars were shocked to hear it. "Cronaxx was right," said Tint.

Sprig takes the letter and X's glasses and reads it at a fast pace. "I have to get up there," he said. "I'm going with you," said Tint. "I have unfinished business to attend anyway." The two take one of the nearby herons and make their way to the top of the tower.

Darrel crawls over to Anne, with little strength he has. The two watch as Andrias prepares to give them the finishing blow. Seeing there's no way out, Darrel looks to Anne, and she looks back. He places his hand on hers and the two close their eyes and brace for impact.

Then all of a sudden, Andrias was hit by one of the herons and Sprig and Tint jump down to the humans. Andrias grabs the heron and throws him down to the highway. "Andrias!" Tint shouted. Sprig takes a boom shroom and hits Andrias with it.

"Anne, Darrel," said Sprig. "Get out of here guys," said Anne. "He's too much, and we're useless now." "Not yet," said Tint. "We have one more card to play." Andrias recovers from the heron attack and spots Tint and Sprig. "Four for one eh? Why not!?"

Andrias prepares to slam down on them, but Sprig stops him. By showing him the hidden letter. "STOP! I have a message from Leif!" Andrias stops the moment he hears her name. He looks down at the letter and sees the hidden message. "How do you know that name?" Andrias asked. "Sprig is Leif's descendant," said Tint. "He found the letter in his family's basement."

"She was the one who betrayed you alongside Cronaxx, wasn't she?" Sprig asked. "So what if she was?" Andrias asked in an angry tone. "She still has something to say to you," said Sprig. "I would like to take this chance to show you her memories too," said Tint. As Tint conjures up a vision spell, Sprig reads Leif's note to Andrias.

' *My Dearest Andrias,*

This message may never reach you, but I hope it does. I know you must hate me. Please hear me out. After hiding the music box on Earth, I knew I could never return to the kingdom. Change was scary and it was hard for me to open my heart to others again. But I'm glad I did. We spent our lives afraid of change, but after many years, I realized the beauty of life is the change. And through it all I had such wonderful memories of you. For even though you, Cronaxx, Barrel, and I are no longer together. The three of you never really left my side. In the end, my only remaining wish is that somehow, someday, my love reaches you. So I'm begging you, my dearest friend. Don't close yourself off. Open your heart, and follow it.

With love always,

Your Leif'

Tint portrays Leif's memories like a crystal ball showing him her treasured memories she kept in her heart. From the day she left the kingdom, to settling down in Wartwood, to the end of her days. To the fondest memories she had with her oldest and dearest friends. It even made Tint cry a bit, seeing how happy his uncle was with Andrias.

Sprig loses grip on the letter, but Andrias catches it in the wind. He looks down on the letter and opens his helmet. Showing a heartbroken face on him. "All this time," he said. "I thought you had forgotten me, just like Cronaxx. And I tried to forget you." Andrias gripped the letter and started to cry as well. "My dear friend. And Cronaxx... What have I done?!"

Andrias falls to his knees and starts crying his heart out. Tint cries, seeing the enemy of his family, heartbroken with what he's done. He walked up to Andrias and spoke to him. "Cronaxx never wanted to forget you or his friends. But he sacrificed his memories, and his dreams, to keep those he cared about safe. To keep you safe."

"But it's too late," said Andrias. "The things I've done, the pain I've caused. There's no GOING BACK!" He slams down on the tower,

causing a tremor in the city. "You're right," said Tint. "There is no going back. So we have to move forward." "How do you do that?" Andrias asked. "Like this," replied Tint. "King Andrias, I forgive you. For hurting me, my family, and my friends." Andrias looked up to the fire salamander in shock and surprise.

Back in the castle, Sasha was instantly healed by Sarah and got back in the fight with Darcy. Darcy overpowered her and Matthew again. "Well, my friends, it's been fun." Seeing there's no way out, Sasha said, "Do your worst." "Sure," replied Darcy.

Before Darcy could swing their weapon, a voice in the hive mind tells them that Andiras has stopped fighting. "It can't be," said Darcy. Andiras' crown opens its eye looking down on the heartbroken king. Darcy opens a window to see Andrias kneeling on the tower. "Aldrich, your son is losing the will to fight," said Darcy. "That weakling!"

"Hey Sasha, as a fellow control freak, you'll probably appreciate this!" Darcy conjures a mind control wave on Andrias. Tint takes notice and watches them attempt to control Andiras. Andiras tried to fight back, but couldn't do it. "Andrias!" Darcy cried. "Stand up and fight you pathetic excuse for a king!"

"NO!" Tint shouted. He conjures up a counter spell to stop Darcy from controlling Andrias. "We are all you need," said Darcy. "That's not TRUE!" Tint shouted. Tint gave it all he's got, while Anne and Darrel slowly recovered their calamity powers. With Darcy distracted, Grime uses his newly recovered strength to kick Sasha's sword to her.

Taking her sword, Sasha recalls the words from her best friends. 'It's not who we were that matters, Sash. It's who we are now that counts,' said Anne's voice. 'Yesterday is history, tomorrow is the future, but today is a gift. That is why it is called the present,' said Darrel's voice. Sasha gathers up what strength she has left and glares down at Darcy.

She spots Cronaxx's ghost leaving the Core's helmet and helps Sasha. "Fear nothing," he whispered. Sasha nods and charges at Darcy. As Darcy fights Tint's counter attack, they turn around at the last second and Sasha takes a powerful swing at her foe. "I am *not* that person anymore!" Sasha announced.

After the strike, Darcy dropped their staff and checked for any wounds. So far, it looked like there wasn't a single scratch on them. "Ha, you missed," they teased. Sasha grins at her enemy. "Wanna bet?"

Turns out the strike was on the Core's plug connected to the castle. The cord was sliced in two, and Darcy gave off a horrifying scream. "AAAAHHHHH!" "My connection! You FOOL! Do you have any idea what you've done!?" Darcy tried to fight for control, but without the support from their power cord, the helmet started to shut down.

They gave off a dying wail, causing the eyes surrounding the room to crack and shut down. Then after Darcy stopped screaming, they collapsed to the floor and the helmet was shut off. The helmet disconnects itself from Marcy's head, freeing her from control. Sasha looks down at her passed out friend, "Marcy? Marcy, wake up. Marcy." "Let me try something," said Sarah as she rushed to their aid.

Back at the tower, Anne and Darrel are recharged, and ready to fight for round three. "This. Ends. NOW!" Darrel shouts as he and Anne charge for one final blow. Andrias prepares for another fight, but looks back to Leif's letter and remembers her words. 'Don't close yourself off, open your heart, and follow it.' He then looks to Tint who has just forgiven him for all the hurt that he caused to him.

Andrias decided to follow his heart, and fulfill his closest friend's request. He removes his helmet and allows the two humans to deliver the last blow. The two strike their blows through the giant robot's heart, destroying Andrias' mech, and himself at the same time.

After the blow, Anne and Darrel pass out from exhaustion and are caught by Sprig and Tint. With the robot mech destroyed, Anne and Darrel win the fight for Los Angeles. The crowd cheers across the city and Tint and Sprig congratulate their friends.

"You guys won!" Sprig cheered. "You did it!" "No," said Darrel. "We all won," said Anne. "And as far as I'm concerned Tint," said Darrel. "You have officially become a wizard. You stood your ground against your greatest foe. You showed compassion and forgave those who hurt you. I think Cronaxx, and your family would be proud of the salamander you have become."

Then, the four hear Andrias coughing. They turn to see him heavily wounded, but filled with wires and circuits coming from out his body. His left arm, left leg, and a part of his tail were missing from the strike. "He's a cyborg," said Darrel. "Andrias is a gosh dang cyborg!"

"Living for a thousand years was not without sacrifice," said Andrias. Darrel looked down in shame. The once great king Andrias, sacrificed his mortality to live for so long. To fulfill his father's long awaited plans of world conquest.

The four turn back to the castle and find that Sasha has turned off the shield generator. "The forcefield is down!" Anne cried. "Sasha must've won!" "Marcy," said Andrias. "You must save Marcy." Darrel and Anne were shocked to hear that Marcy's in trouble so they took to their flying companions and flew to the castle.

They enter the generator room, and find Marcy looking lifeless, being held by Sasha. Darrel and Anne raced to her aid. "Mom, can't you heal her?" Darrel asked. "It's not physical," said Sarah. "I'm sorry, I did all I could."

Darrel and Anne look down at their friend in sorrow. "It's not your fault," said Darrel. "Oh Marcy," said Anne as she hugged her friend. "We love you and..." "We forgive you," said Sasha. The three friends hold a tight grip on her hand. "Please," said Darrel. "Come back to us. Don't give up on me, Dungeon Buddy."

As the three grieve, Marcy slowly opens her eyes. "Anne? Sasha? Darrel?" The three looked with joy and relief. "Marcy!" "You came back!" "You're alive!" The four were so happy to be together once again. The surrounding friends were all relieved that Marcy was okay.

"Guys," said Marcy. "I'm sorry. I was so scared of moving away. The thought of losing you was just so big. I was afraid that if we weren't together, we wouldn't be friends any more." Anne takes her hand and says, "I know it's hard Marcy. But no matter how much we fight it or deny it, things change. We can't stop it. But nothing, not distance or time will break the bond that we share. Because nothing can take away the memories of the time we spent together."

"She's right," said Darrel. "And believe me, I would never ever stop being your friend. No matter how far apart we are. And just because I love Anne doesn't mean I don't hold a special place for you in my heart. We're dungeon buddies for life. End of story." Marcy wiped her eyes and asked, "You promise?" "I promise," replied Darrel. "Nothing can ever defeat us." "Not when we have the Power of Friendship," said Marcy. "And besides," said Darrel. "If you didn't do what you did..." He points to his mother who is back in healthy shape. "My mom wouldn't be standing here right now."

"Now come here you guys!" Anne said as she hugged them all. "I'm so happy!" Darrel cheered. "Can you guys believe that we just defeated an ancient invading empire?" Anne asked. Sasha chuckled, "That's going to look real good on future job applications." "And we'll have videos to prove it," said Marcy. The four friends laughed and got everyone in for a group hug, Grime included. What little do they know was that the Core's helmet instantly turned on and crawled out of sight.

Back in the streets of Los Angeles, the herons were cleaning up all the rubble and robot parts that have been left on the streets. Matthew and Sarah return to help the Boonchuys and their daughters. They look at their phone and contact Anne and the others. The four friends were planning on tying up loose ends. They

gathered all their Amphibia friends, Andrias included, and prepared to go back to Amphibia.

"Now we just need to see everyone back safely to Amphibia," said Anne. "And make sure everything's okay on the other side." She gives them a thumbs up, and so do Jane and Amelia. "We'll hold down the fort here," said Mrs Boonchuy. "Just until you get back home," said Matthew.

"And Mr and Mrs B and L," said Marcy. "Could you let our parents know we're okay?" "And that we'll be back soon?" Sasha asked. "Sure," replied Mr Boonchuy. "Now that the robot attack was all over TV, it'll be easier to explain."

"See you soon," said Marcy. "And Mrs L, I'm glad you're feeling better." "Me too, Marcy," said Sarah. "Me too." "Bye everyone," said Darrel. Then, Anne hangs up and the group set out for Amphibia one last time. They charge the music box and drive the castle through the portal.

Back in Amphibia, the resistance was still fighting what's left of the robot army until the castle returned to Newtopia. They looked like they were going to land, until the castle missed the landing pad and landed in the shallow waters next to the city.

"Woo! Stuck the landing!" Polly cheered. The rest of the group groaned, "Okay," said Marcy. "Who thought letting Polly drive was a good idea?" The group walk to the balcony to find the resistance looking over the castle. Lady Olivia delivered the good news, "King Andrias and Darcy have been defeated! We are Victorious!"

The citizens of Amphibia, frogs, newts, toads, and salamanders were all so happy that the war was officially over. The crowd cheered and cheered, and the group looked down on them with happiness.

"Huh," said Sasha. "Everything is over. Looks like we didn't even need that prophecy." Marcy was shocked to hear what Sasha said. "Prophecy? What Prophecy?" Darrel and Anne look up to the sky,

holding hands. Sprig looks down and asks them, "Anne, do you think things between us will change too? The way that things change between you, Sasha, Marcy, and Darrel?" Anne smiled, "It's hard to say Sprig. But if they do, we'll face it together." "Together," said Tint. Darrel nods in response. The four look back up to the sky, and Sprig spots something very strange.

"Hey, is it just me? Or is the moon getting closer?" The four look up, and so do the rest of Amphibia. They watch in horror as the red moon, overlooking Amphibia, is approaching at an alarming state. "Wha- What's going on?" Anne asked. "No," said Cronaxx. "It can't be..."

WHEW! That was a LONG and interesting chapter. Now I know that the next part will involve the Hardest Thing, but it'll be worth it. I can't believe how much Amphibia has impacted my life. Well, just one more chapter to go and Loyalty Among Worlds will officially be over. Keep on Truckin' everyone. Get ready for the big finale in The Tale of the Four Stones (Part 2).

The Tale of the Four Stones (Part 2)

All of Amphibia could not breathe as they watched their moon heading towards their home world. They took notice that the moon started changing. From what became craters, turned into red glowing eyes. The eyes looked just like the Core's

Darrel starts to pick up a strange, but familiar vibe. He decided to tap into the Core's eyes again. He concentrates and picks up their location on the moon. But as he looked into their eyes, his staff's gemstone started cracking.

Tint takes notice and snaps Darrel out of it. "Darrel!" cried Tint. He shook his cape and Darrel's eyes returned to normal. "It's the Core!" he cried. "And your staff," said Tint. Darrel looks down to his staff and sees the cracked gemstone. Cronaxx was worried, "That is not good." Tint and Darrel turn to him and ask, "What do you mean?"

"That fight with Andrias must've somehow caused the magic to start leaking from the crystal. Any more spells you use can cause more friction to the containment of the staff. And if it becomes too much, the crystal will break, and all the magic will be released. That will mean..."

"If the crystal breaks," said Darrel. "I can't perform magic anymore." "He's right," said Tint. "Uh, Darrel?" Sasha asked. "I think we're about to have much bigger problems than your staff." She points back to the moon getting the wizards' attention.

"Oh crud," said Anne. The group rejoins with the citizens of Amphibia, not taking their eyes off the moon. "The Core," said Darrel. The group turns to Darrel, who turns to Andrias. "Andrias, what's going on?"

Andrias chuckled, "It seems the Core has activated its final gambit." "It's WHAT!?" Hop pop asked. Andrias continued his explanation,

"When our civilization was at its final peak, the moon became home to some of the Core's pet projects. Among them, a plan to eradicate all life as we know it. By ramming the moon into Amphibia's surface." The crowd gasped in shock.

"Excuse me?!" Anne exclaimed. "Why?!" "Fear," replied Marcy and Darrel. "I've been in that thing's head," said Marcy. "We'd know that more than anything," said Darrel. "It's afraid of being destroyed," said Marcy. "Of being irrelevant. It will do whatever it takes to defeat us and claim the stones as its own. If that means destroying an entire civilization, then so be it."

"So the Core found a way to stick it to us," said Darrel. "Even in defeat." Sasha comes up and complains, "So what he's saying is that this thing's a GIANT SORE LOSER!" "Hmm, more or less," replied Andrias. "We have to do something," said Sprig. "Anyone have any ideas on how to stop an entire moon?!"

"Darrel," said Anne. "Can't you use your magic to stop it?" Darrel shook his head no, "I can't perform magic that powerful anymore." He shows the Eternal Staff to the group, showing the cracks on the crystal.

"After Andrias delivered that powerful blow during the fight, he destroyed the containment enchantment, keeping the magic under control. If I perform another strong spell such as pushing the moon back to orbit, the gemstone will crack and all the magic will be released."

"And that means..." said Marcy. "The magic given to me will be released as well," said Darrel. "Kiss my magic abilities goodbye." The group sulks knowing Darrel's gift is now on thin ice. What else can they do? They've got little magic, and a giant moon is about to crash, attempting to destroy all life as they know it.

Then, the ground began to shake beneath their feet. "And Earthquakes!?" Polly gasped. "Don't we have enough going on!?" But it wasn't an earthquake, it was Mother Olm digging out from the

ground. "Mother Olm?" Darrel, Sasha, and Anne asked. "Who is this now?" Marcy asked. "Oh that's right, you weren't with us," said Darrel.

"So, how did it go?" asked Mother Olm. "Well we stopped the invasion," replied Sprig. "But now," said Tint. "The moon is about to kill us all." Mother Olm turns to the moon, "I see. Then the prophecy has finally come to pass."

Marcy gasped in excitement, "Sasha mentioned this! What did it say, what did it say?" Darrel placed his hand on her shoulder, getting her attention. "Allow me to explain. The prophecy says: 'Four Stars burning bright. Come from beyond to expel the Night. Should they fight or embrace The Fall? Their choice shall determine the Fate of All.'"

Marcy, including the crowd, were amazed at how he presented the prophecy. "It means," said Anne. "That the four of us will save the world. So let's go save the world!" The four friends cheered in agreement, until Mother Olm spoke up.

"Well, just a minute. The prophecy doesn't necessarily say you'll succeed." "Wha?" The humans asked. Mother Olm continues her explanation. "You see, the prophecy isn't so much a prediction, as it is a humble request for help. And know this: You have to tap into the energy that remains in the stones, in order to get the energy you need. However, if you do that..."

"There might not be enough energy left for us to get home," said Anne. "This is a tough decision," said Darrel. "We could be stuck in Amphibia forever," said Sasha. "Yeah," said Mother Olm. "So now that all the cards are on the table, what will you do? The choice is yours."

Looking back at each other, and to their friends they have made on their grand adventure. The four friends thought for a while. Looking down at his staff, Darrel recalls Cronaxx's final lesson. ' *With the world at stake the only thing of importance is that you complete your*

mission. No matter what you have to sacrifice... or who. ' He looked back to his friends and smiled.

The others smiled too, "You call that a choice?" Sasha asked. "Of course we'll help!" cheered Marcy. "There's no way we'd leave you hanging in your hour of need," said Anne. "Let's do this!" cheered Darrel. The rest of Amphibia congratulated them on their bravery and Toadstool was gripping Toadie too tightly. "Whew, I wasn't worried. Was you worried, Toadie? Cause I sure wasn't."

"Follow me," said Darrel. "Let's get powered up. To the music box!" The group starts to return to the castle, but Mother Olm stops Anne for a moment. "Anne, one more thing," she said. "The stones are strong, but they may not be enough to defeat the Core. If things look bad out there, don't forget about the Secret Spell."

"Wait, the secret, what now?" Anne asked. "Didn't I tell you about that?" Mother Olm asked. "No you didn't," replied Cronaxx. "Listen, Anne. I wasn't going to tell Darrel about this because I know what he would do if he got the chance." Anne listened to Cronaxx very carefully.

"When I was researching about the stones, I came across a rumor that they hold a hidden power. A power that is strong enough to defeat any foe." "But I warned Cronaxx," said Mother Olm. "That summoning such power, comes with a price: The life of the user."

Anne came to a realization, "So whoever uses the spell..." "Yes," said Cronaxx. "... to use all the power of the stones, they will die. That's why I'm asking you, don't let Darrel use that spell. He's all Tint has left." "But hopefully, it will never come to that," said Mother Olm. "Am I right? Okay, good luck up there."

"Wait," Anne stopped Mother Olm from leaving. "The spell, how do I use it?" Cronaxx smiles sadly, knowing that she's fulfilling his request. "My child," said Mother Olm. "You have only but to ask." "Come on," said Cronaxx. "We've got to catch up to them. But don't tell Darrel about the spell."

In the castle, Anne caught up with the others. "Hey," she said. "Sorry for the hold up guys." "Anne," said Darrel. "Look who's here." She gasped at the amphibian he pointed to. It was none other than Valeriana. "She was waiting for us when we got here," said Marcy. "Talk about perfect timing," said Tint. "Pretty creepy if you ask me," said Sasha. Then, Valeriana's bird perches on top of her head.

"Hello Anne," said Valeriana. "Are you ready for your final battle?" "Oh heck yeah," replied Anne. "Good," said Valeriana. "Now, the four of you gather around the box, and close your eyes." The four humans do so and concentrate on unlocking their calamity powers.

"Focus. Think of your memories of Amphibia, of how much this world means to you. This will allow the stones to resonate with your hearts once again!" Valeriana takes her staff and channels the power to reconnect with the stones to all four humans. The stones reconnect with Sasha, Marcy, and give what's left to Darrel and Anne in their specific stones.

The four humans glowed the same aura as the color of their stones. And the stones themselves were lifted from the box and connected with their hosts. Bright lights of blue, purple, green, and red filled the room and burst through the castle windows.

"Warriors of Amphibia, arise!" Valeriana declared. The lights die down revealing the four humans in their warrior outfits. Anne glowed blue wearing gold gauntlets, chest plate, boots, and a blue cape. With blue gemstones decorated with them. Marcy glowed green, wearing a golden chest plate with a light green cape, gold boots and fingerless gloves. With peridot gemstones decorated on her. Sasha was glowing a pinkish purple. Her armor was covered with spikes and her ponytail was as long as a blaze of fire. Darrel was glowing bright red. His armor was a red wizard's cloak with a gold chest plate and shoulder pads, decorated with glowing red eyes. His hat consists of any ordinary wizard hat, decorated with stars and a crescent moon. His footwear consists of baggy shoes, but tight enough to stay secure. The Eternal Staff's stick changes to a golden metal rod with a few spikes and a crescent moon on the end where

the crystal resides. The crystal floats with only a few cracks disappearing.

"This is awesome," said Darrel. "Swanky duds," said Anne. Sasha tries out her calamity powers and shoots a blast of energy from her fists through the roof. Destroying Andrias' cannon in the process. "Anne, Darrel, you could do that this whole time?" She asked. "It's a recent development," said Darrel. "These powers are way more intense than before," replied Anne. "Maybe that's because we have the other half of their powers," said Darrel.

"The powers must stack when used in tandem! Classic synergy buff," said Marcy. "Okay then," said Anne. "Let's go punch that moon in its big ugly face!" The humans gather together and with their powers they take off to the skies, into outer space.

Tint, Cronaxx, and the Plantars cheered for their friends. "Yes, YES!" cried Sprig. "Get it, girl!" "I know them!" shouted Polly. "They lived in my basement," said Hop pop. "Go for it, Darrel," said Tint. "We're right behind you." Cronaxx looked to his nephew and looked up with worry. 'Be careful,' he thought.

The four calamity warriors arrive at the moon and the Core spots them. "Incoming targets," they said. "Deploy defenses." The core activates a small compartment and unleashes all its pet projects that Andrias explained earlier. "That's no moon," said Darrel. "It's more of a space station."

The pet projects consist of robotic insects and sea creatures most people would find in swamps or in the deep dark trenches of the abyss. But that wouldn't stop the four from standing face to face with them. "Game on you stinky space bugs," said Anne.

She conjures up her powers to make a powerful plasma tennis racket. "Here's a serve!" Then hits a plasma tennis ball, which turns into a cat, and then multiplies into multiple cats. All of those plasma blasts hit multiple robots, causing them to explode and make the word 'Ace' appear.

Now it was Darrel's turn, he took his staff and swung it to create multiple copies of himself. All those Darrels then shot fireballs shaped into dragonflies and they made more of the robots explode. "You shall not PASS!" he shouted. He creates a shockwave to push some of the robots towards Sasha.

Sasha conjured up a pair of pom poms, then flew with wings on her back. Punching and kicking whatever came her way. When she comes across a giant robot, she wastes no breath and creates one huge ball of plasmic energy. The robot tries to fight back, but it isn't enough, and the robot explodes. Creating a pink cloud in the shape of a heron.

Marcy watched from afar, with tears of joy. "This is the coolest, most anime thing that's ever happened to me," she said. "I am so happy to be able to fight by your side." Marcy conjures up a twenty sided die and rolls it at the robots. Making every one of them explode as they come in contact.

One of the robots catches the die, but Marcy grins. "Nat 20, baby!" The die then explodes making a smoke of green appear like a barrage of weapons. The four warriors come together in a group hug, happy to be fighting on the same side for a change and continue to fight off the robots.

Back on the surface, Andrias watches them fight from below. Then, he hears a familiar voice. "Andrias." He looks up to his crown, knowing who it was. "Father?" "Help us," said Aldrich. "Save us, and you can finally join us! Forever!"

As Andrias starts to move, Tint and Grime stop him. "What are you doing?" Grime asked. "This is your second chance," said Tint. "Do the right thing." Andrias closed his eyes for a moment. His mind flashed an image of Cronaxx, Leif, and Barrel, his greatest friends and then said, "Frobots, engage." The last of the Frobots activate their rocket launchers and they make their way up to the moon.

"Enough of the small fry," said Anne. "Time to take care of that moon." The four warriors fly in front of the moon and give it all they got to push it back into orbit. As they do, Marcy spots Andrias' robots heading straight for them. She tries to stop them, but trips in mid-flight.

But much to their surprise, the robots help them push the moon away from Amphibia. "No way," said Sasha. "They're helping us," said Anne. "Andrias," said Darrel. "Thank you." As they continue to push the moon, Grime stands in shock. "I don't believe this," "I do," said Tint. "He's finally doing something useful. In honor of his friends, his *true* family."

Andrias smiles at the salamander until Aldrich speaks up. "You Fool!" Andrias takes his crown and looks down on it. "You could've been immortal! What are you doing!?" Andrias grips on his crown and starts crushing the only relic he has communicating with his father. "Something I should've done a long time ago, murderer. Standing up to YOU!" His grip crushes the crown causing it to break into little pieces. "Full Throttle Engaged!"

The robots proceed to give it all they've got, helping the humans fight back against the Core. "No way that's getting through," said Darrel. But it wasn't enough. The Core goes full throttle on its own and proceeds to push them back down to Amphibia. "FOOLS!" The Core shouted. "You cannot stop A GOD!" "You're no god," said Darrel. "You're an abomination!"

The team struggles to push back as the Core starts to reach the atmosphere. "Even with the robot army it's not enough," said Marcy. Then, Anne and Darrel take notice that Sasha and Marcy's powers are starting to drain. "Guys," said Sasha. "Hate to bring this up, but I think I'm fading fast." "Me too," said Marcy. "Our bodies are not as used to this as yours."

Darrel continues to fight back, even though his powers are draining. "I can't let this happen!" He takes his staff and tries to give Sasha

and Marcy more strength. But the cracks on the crystal, continue to grow. "Please, no," said Darrel. "Not now!"

Anne looked at her friends, and she was worried something like this would happen. She couldn't let them fail, so she had one more idea. Knowing it could be her last. "Guys, I know what we have to do," she said. "I'm going to call the power of all four stones. I may die in the process, but at least you and everyone else would be safe."

Darrel, Sasha, and Marcy were shocked to hear they might lose their friend. "What?! Are you crazy?!" "There's no way we're letting you do that!" "You can't do that! You just can't!" Then, out of nowhere, the robots start exploding from giving it all they've got. Time was running short. And a whole world was on the line.

"Our whole lives, I've followed you," said Anne. "Counted on you, trusted you. Now it's your turn to follow my lead. Please let me do this." The three friends started tearing up, and Sasha and Marcy reluctantly gave her their stones. Darrel however, stood his ground. "Darrel, give me your stone."

"I can't believe you'd do this to me," he said. "I won't give you my stone!" "Darrel," said Anne. "We don't have a choice." "There's always a choice!" cried Darrel. "I'll take your place, I can save the world! I can -I can..." Darrel started breaking down in tears. He couldn't let his girlfriend give her life to save others.

"Darrel," said Anne. "Cronaxx told me not to tell you about this because he knew this would happen." Darrel perked up hearing Cronaxx kept this from him. "He wants you to make sure Tint's okay. You're all he has left to count on." "NO!" Darrel cried. "I can't lose you again!" Darrel started breathing heavily, "I made you a promise. And you're breaking it."

Anne takes her hand and places it on Darrel's cheek. "No I'm not," she said. "We promised that we were going to find each other and get back home, whatever it takes. And if this is what it will take to get you home, then so be it." Darrel grabs Anne's hand as tears start

flowing down his face. "I can't live without you," he said. "I know, Darrel Barrel," said Anne. "But sometimes there are more important things than what we want in life."

Darrel looks into Anne's eyes as he takes the stone out of his chest. The two give one last kiss, just as Darrel reluctantly gives Anne his stone. The two break the kiss and regroup with Sasha and Marcy. "I'm not sure how this'll go," said Anne. "So, you better get out of here." The three friends give her one last hug just as the robots start exploding at a fast rate.

Anne uses her powers to get her friends back to Amphibia safely. "You better come back alive Boonchuy," said Sasha. "I swear to frog, you better!" "I love you! So MUCH!" Darrel cried. "I love you too, Darrel," said Anne. "More than anything." Anne shoots them back to the surface and stands against the Core alone.

Down on the surface, the three humans stood tired and sad. Tint, and the Plantars raced to their side. "Hey," said Polly. "Aren't you supposed to be saving the world?" "Anne sent us back," said Marcy. "She's going to try to stop it herself, but..." "She said she may not make it," finished Sasha. Darrel dropped to his knees crying.

The Plantars and Tint were shocked. "No no no no no," said Sprig. "We can't let her!" He goes to Frobo and says, "Frobo! Take me to Anne! Now!" Hop pop and Polly tried to stop him, but Frobo launched into the sky.

Anne shows the stones to the Core. "Whelp," the Core mocked. "You dare use Amphibia's greatest treasure against us?!" "These stones are not Amphibia's greatest treasure," said Anne. She then recalls all the life she encountered in Amphibia, reminding herself that they are the greatest treasure, not the stones.

She calls upon the stones, "Mother Olm said that all I had to do was ask. So, I'm asking. Can you help me save the world I love?" The power of the stones give it all they've got. And in the process of giving Anne the power, the stones break apart. The next thing

everyone knew, was that Anne's body turned white. As bright as a shining star in the sky.

"Anne!" Sprig called. Anne turns to see Sprig trying to reach her with Frobo. "Please don't do this!" Sprig begged. "Don't go! I don't know what I'd do without you! You're my everything! You've changed my life."

Anne takes his hand and says back, "And you've changed mine." Sprig cries in her hands and eventually lets go. He takes off with Frobo and flies at a safe distance. "Goodbye Sprig," said Anne.

She turns back to the Core and she gives off a bright beam of light in the center of the Core's eye. The beam shoots right through the moon, disintegrating it from behind. Darrel could only watch from below. He was so sad, he tried to do something. "NO!" he cried. "I WON'T LOSE YOU!"

He takes his staff and shoots a magical beam to try and give her enough power to stay alive. But as the beam went higher and higher, the crystal on the Eternal Staff continued to crack. He didn't care if he could use his abilities anymore. All he cared about was saving his best friend.

As the Core continued to engulf in the bright light. The helmet suddenly began to crack, destroying all the preserved souls that remained within. Including King Aldrich. At the same time, with the helmet destroyed, the crystal of the Eternal Staff broke apart in pieces. The sudden destruction of the staff blew Darrel back a few meters away, and the magic began to fade into the sky.

The next thing all of Amphibia knew was that the moon was left with nothing but a pile of rocks in the sky. All of Amphibia cheered. The Core was no more. But not all was won, for Anne's fragile pale body was floating in the cold abyss of space. Thankfully Sprig and Frobo were there to get her back on the ground.

Darrel raced to her side just as Frobo set her down in the water. "Come on, Anne," said Sprig. "It'll be okay." "Come one Darrel," said Tint. "You gotta heal her!" "I'm trying!" Darrel cried. He takes what's left of his staff and tries to magically heal her. But nothing happened. Darrel was without magical abilities. He couldn't save her.

He drops his staff and cries on his knees. "Anne, I can't do it. I can't heal you." Darrel, Tint, Cronaxx, the Plantars, all of Amphibia, even Grime, all cried for their fallen star hero. "Don't cry, you guys," said Anne in a weak tone. "It's okay. Saving this world is the best decision I've ever made. My only regret is that I never got to see Love Choice Two."

Some of her friends chuckled, only for Anne to disintegrate into nothing but white leaves. Anne closed her eyes and embraced her sacrifice with a smile on her face, until there was nothing left. The mourning friends witness her glorious fall. And a great cry rose up from Darrel's heart.

"AAAAAAAAAANNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNNEEEEEEEEEEE!"

It was all dark, and all Anne could hear was the sound of her friends calling her name. She opens her eyes and finds herself on a floating island in space. It looked just like the poster in her bedroom. She turns to a house nearby and opens the door. In front of her was an old timey computer that was made in the eighties. Surrounding the walls were pictures of all her friends, family, and loved ones.

She sits down by the computer and a chat invite appears from a 4_Stones_Deity. She accepts the invite and they start chatting. "Hello Anne 0.o " "Uh, hello," said Anne before she started typing. "Hi. Who are you? What is going on? " The username replied, " I am the cosmic guardian who has watched over countless worlds for countless eons... :)"

"Uh, okay," said Anne. " What's up with this old timey computer? " 4_Stones_Deity replied, " Old? Are you human teens using

something else these days? " " *You're off by a couple of decades,* " replied Anne.

" *Well perhaps we should try a different form,* " The Deity makes the old computer glow a bright light, and changes into the form of Anne's cat, Domino. "How's this?" asked the guardian. "Better?"

"So much better," replied Anne. She takes the guardian in her arms and hugs her. But the guardian stops her. "None of that," they said. "Sorry," said Anne. "I figured your response would be something like this," said the guardian. "I am very cute."

"So what's going on?" Anne asked. "Am I dead or something?" "Yes and no," replied the guardian. "I made a copy of you right before you expired. A backup if you will. For all intents and purposes, you're the same Anne Boonchuy."

Anne stares down at the guardian feeling shocked and dumbstruck. "Well that's gonna cause some serious existential dread later on," she said. "So does that make you.." "Just a watcher," replied the guardian. "A viewer, I'm not in the demographic though."

"And you look like my cat because..?" Anne asked. "My true form would make your human brain explode," replied the guardian. "I don't know," said Anne. "I've seen some pretty crazy-" To prove a point the guardian revealed its true form causing Anne to scream.

The next moment, the guardian switched back into Domino. "Now to business," they said. "Anne Boonchuy, I brought you to this place because I want to offer you a job." Anne was surprised. "Wha?" "To keep a near infinite story short, I have been doing this job for a very long time. It's exhausting. So, I was hoping you would consider being my replacement."

"Me?" asked Anne. "Yes you," replied the guardian on top of Anne's head. "Look, I created the stones to see how mortals would handle unlimited power. Turns out... not that well! Would you believe that

after over 10,000 years, you're the only individual who used that power for good?"

"Uh, this is a lot to take in right now," said Anne. "I mean, do I have a choice?" "Well of course you do," replied the guardian. "I'm not a jerk." Anne smiles, "Well then, I'm going to have to pass."

The guardian was most upset hearing the news of her rejection. "Wha?! No! I haven't even told you about Bagel Fridays!" "Sorry dude," said Anne. "You seem cool, but I'm just a 13-year-old kid. For every "heroic sacrifice", I make a hundred dumb mistakes. I'd probably blow up the multiverse if you put me in charge."

"No," said the guardian. "Don't do this to me, kid. You're the only one who qualifies! You're perfect!" "No one's perfect," said Anne. "My time in Amphibia has taught me we're all changing, and learning and improving as we go. Every time I hit an obstacle, I found a way to overcome it. When I thought Sash and Marcy would be stuck in their old ways, they proved me wrong and our friendship got stronger."

"And the time I spent with Darrel, made me realize we have much more in common than we realized. I mean if it wasn't for me I would never get to see him become the man he could possibly be. And Wartwood, the oldest-fashioned, least accepting place ended up accepting me as one of their very own."

"So you're saying you could continue improving?" The guardian asked. "Maybe even one day feel worthy of this post?" "It's possible," replied Anne. "I have my whole life ahead of me to make bad choices and learn good lessons from them." However, after remembering what she did, she wondered, "Or I had my whole life ahead of me."

"About that..." said the guardian. The room opens up to a portal of light and Anne starts falling slowly. "Whoa, Whoa, what's happening?" Anne asked. "Am I actually dying this time?" "I am sending you back to the world of the living," replied the guardian.

"You've shown me the error of my thinking. And if you can do that by age thirteen, then imagine the guardian you'll be after life fully lived."

The guardian reveals itself as a big cat with wings, with two of the stones as eyes and two more on its forehead. "And as for this Darrel character," said the guardian. "If you chose to spend the rest of your life with him, I'll preserve a place for him by your side." Anne smiled, "Thanks."

Then the guardian drops Anne into the bright light and says, "Go, live your life. I've waited thousands of years to retire. What's seventy eight years more?" "Wait," said Anne. "Are you saying that in seventy eight years, I'm gonna-" Before Anne could talk anymore, a bright light filled her vision.

As she woke up, she found herself back in the water grounds of Newtopia. She finds everyone crying at the spot where she disintegrated, mostly her friends. Darrel weeps in silence, as Tint hugged him tightly. Sprig tightened his grip on the white leaves. "I'm so sorry Darrel," said Marcy. "We know how much she meant to you," said Sasha.

"I had a great dream once," said Darrel. "It was in a distant future. We were all together, living in balance. And there were fireworks, the lights across the village. Me and Anne dancing. She had ribbons in her hair." Darrel started tearing up again. "If ever I was to marry someone, it would've been her. It would've been her."

As he started crying, a throat clearing was heard. And a familiar voice, no one thought they would hear again. "What's everyone looking at?" Hop pop failed to see at the moment. "Not now Anne," he said. "We're mourning the loss of a true hero. And the greatest kid who ever-"

Darrel and Sprig perked up, and saw her smiling face again. Everyone else soon followed. "Anne?" Sprig and Darrel rushed up and hugged her. "Hey dudes!" Darrel gripped her tightly. "Don't ever do that to me again!" he said. "I won't, I promise," said Anne. The

two kissed passionately until everyone else came in and hugged their almost fallen friend.

"What'd I miss?" Anne asked. "Not much," said Darrel. "But the moon and the Core exploded, and then so did you," said Sasha. "But your back somehow," said Marcy. "Which is amazing. But also, how?"

"I don't know where to begin," said Anne. "The whole thing feels like a dream." Sprig then notices that something is glowing in Anne's pocket. "Question: Why is your pocket glowing?" Anne digs in and reaches out of her pocket.

"What are those?" Sasha asked. "They look like shards of the four stones," said Darrel. Anne opens her hand to reveal the stone shards and a note that says 'TTYL O.o.' "I think they're a chance for a fresh start," said Anne.

The group laugh at their friend's return, all while Andrias looks up to where the moon once stood. He smiled in relief, knowing that the burden his father made him carry was gone. All the pain he gripped tightly was let go. And the evil that he held for so long, was no more. All he could think about were his oldest friends. That they can finally rest in peace, knowing that their friend was once again happy. "It's over," he said as he envisioned his friends one last time. "It's finally over."

But the journey wasn't over yet. After a few hours of celebrating Anne's return, the humans got together with the four stone shards. "So what's our next move?" Darrel asked. "Based on what Anne told us," said Marcy. "I think these shards are low output versions of the stones." "So we can use them to get back home?" Sasha asked. "In theory," replied Marcy. "But it sounds like a one way trip," said Darrel. "These are just crumbs of energy," said Marcy.

"So if we use these to return home," said Anne. "There's no coming back." "Not only that," said Marcy. "Who knows how long they'll hold

for. Could be hours, could be minutes." The four humans looked down on what may be their one way ticket home.

Hop pop and the rest of the amphibians looked with gloom. As much as they would like them to visit from time to time, they all have to go back to their lives. Even if it means never seeing their friends again. "Well we better say our goodbyes," he said.

"Are you sure, Hop pop?" Darrel asked. "Of course," he replied. "You kids need to go back to your own lives and I think we've kept you long enough." The four humans look to each other and nod in agreement. Moments later, all the amphibians and the humans got on top of a cliff overlooking the ruins of Newtopia. So they could say their final goodbyes to their friends.

General Yunan placed a wreath of green flowers on Marcy's head, and Marcy smiled at her and Olivia. "I came to this world thinking only of myself," said Marcy. "It was wrong of me. And I wish I'd gotten to know you both better." "I think we all have a lot to learn, Master Marcy," said Olivia. "Don't be so hard on yourself."

"In a way you helped us see what was important as well," said Yunan. The next thing Marcy saw was that Olivia and Yunan were holding hands. Then she looks up to a distraught former King Andrias. He felt he didn't need to be told goodbye after all the pain he caused her. But he was surprised when Marcy said, "Goodbye Andrias." Andrias sighed in relief, "Take care, kiddo."

The next to be told goodbye was Sasha and Grime. He struggled to put on the wreath of pink flowers on her head, considering that he lost his arm on the field of battle. The two saluted their farewells, "Commander," "Lieutenant, it was an honor serving with you."

Grime offered Sasha a handshake, but Sasha couldn't hold back her tears any more. She cried her heart out and so did Grime. "I'm gonna miss you so much!" Sasha cried. "Not as much as I'm going to miss you," cried Grime. "You find Percy and Braddock," said Sasha.

"You tell them, I'll miss them forever." "I will," replied Grime. "As soon as I find the pieces of my heart and put them back together."

Now it was Darrel's turn to say goodbye. His wreath of red flowers floated on top of his head thanks to Tint. "It's a shame you're not going to do this stuff again," he said. "That's okay," said Darrel. "I've lived without magic for thirteen years. What's the harm for a few more?" "It's amazing," said Tint. "To think our friendship started after I saved you from eating a poisoned fruit."

"Magic or no magic," said Cronaxx. "You are one of the best wizards I have ever trained." Darrel sniffled wanting to speak from the heart. "Thank you so much Grandpa. I'd hug you, but you'd just phase through." "I'll take that hug," said Tint. As the two hugged, a familiar compass fell out of Darrel's pocket.

Tint picked it up for him. "Here's your father's compass." Darrel pushes it back to Tint. "Keep it," he said. "I was lost, but not any more. Besides, you're part of our family, and that compass will help you remember that." Happy with the gesture, Tint takes off his neckerchief and gives it to Darrel. "So you'll have something to remember me by."

Darrel looks up to Clipper and Costa and smiles. "You two were the best flying friends I ever had. Now you can live your lives to the fullest." Clipper and Costa nuzzle their heads on Darrel's hands and get in the group hug with Tint and Cronaxx.

And finally, Anne, with a wreath of blue flowers on her head, was ready to say goodbye to the Plantars. She started with Polly, the little tadpole. "Goodbye Polly," she said. "You're the little sister I never knew I needed. I know you're going to grow into an amazing frog and take over the world." Polly sniffled, "Without you as my moral compass, I definitely will."

The two hug it out, then Anne turns to Hop pop. "Goodbye, HP. Thanks for taking me in. I'm so lucky to call myself a Plantar." "I'm the lucky one, Anne," said Hop pop. "And I'm so blessed to have a

granddaughter like you. If you ever need a home cooked meal, or your old room back, just stop by." "Like an old wise frog once told me," said Anne. "Family always finds each other." The two hug goodbye, leaving one more friend left.

Sprig Plantar, looking down with watery eyes, gripping his hat tightly, wasn't sure he wanted to say goodbye. But he had to, and it's the hardest thing in his life, to let his best friend go. The two hugged tightly, and Sprig broke the silence. "Goodbye Anne, I'll never forget you." "And I won't forget you either Sprig," said Anne. "Which means we will never be apart. Not really. Nothing will ever change how much you mean to me. Not time, or space, or being worlds apart."

"Spranne against the world?" Sprig asked. "Spranne against the world," replied Anne. The two perform their special handshake one last time. She pulls out her phone and gives it to Sprig. "I want you to have this," she said. "Maybe it'll help you on your future adventures."

Anne, Sprig, Hop pop, Polly, Frobo, Bessie, Darrel, Tint, Cronaxx, Clipper, Costa, Sasha, Grime, Marcy, Olivia, and Yunan embrace in a long hug until Valeriana comes up with the calamity box. The humans let go of their amphibian friends and turn around. "We're ready," said Darrel.

Valeriana places the stone shards in the slots where the stones once laid. Then she turns to open the box, and a portal opens. Anne, Darrel, Sasha, and Marcy look up to their one way ticket home. Then, they turn around, standing hand in hand. Looking back at all the friends they've made, as one big final goodbye. They bow to their friends, and they cheer and cry farewell to them.

Sasha and Marcy were the first to cross the portal. Then, Tint hugged Darrel goodbye one last time and said, "Goodbye, brother." Darrel smiled, "Look to the stars, dear brother, and you'll find me again." And before he could go any further, he saw Anne and Sprig hug once again. "Anne," said Darrel. "It's time."

Anne lets Sprig go and takes Darrel's hand as the two cross the portal back home. After they crossed, the portal closed, leaving only a small leaf to fall in their place. Cronaxx smiled, "Now, my work here is done." He hugs his nephew once more, knowing his unfinished business was over. "Goodbye, Tint," he said. "Remember who you are." He snaps his fingers, causing the powerless music box to disintegrate into the air. And his spirit ascends to the sky, finally at peace.

"So what now?" Hop pop asked. "Now we build a better world," replied Olivia. "Together," said Grime. Then out of nowhere, Polly gets a tingly sensation coming from the side of her head, and then a strand of hair pops out. "Not to undercut you guys," she said. "But I JUST GOT MY FIRST HAIR!"

On the other side of the portal, Darrel, Anne, Sasha, and Marcy have finally returned home after months of being apart. Darrel looks back to see the portal close and looks back up to the bright orange sky of Los Angeles. He puts his hands in the pockets of his wizard robes and finds a shard of the crystal of the Eternal Staff. Darrel keeps a firm grip on it, and the four friends make their way back to their families.

Time had passed in Amphibia. And what was once desolate wastelands now thrive with new fresh fields of grass. The factories were once abandoned again, never to be touched by life. Kill a moths and dragonflies fly in harmony and dominate the skies with their beautiful color schemes.

Out in the fields of Wartwood, Andrias, a once mighty tyrant king, was now living in exile among the common folk. He was wearing a dark cloak, using Barrel's war hammer as a cane. And on his cloak were two pins of his friends Leif and Marcy. His eyes have now become slightly milky from aging. His community service was to help farm in the fields of Amphibia. But Andrias didn't mind, for his past experiences changed him for the better.

In the town of Wartwood, One eyed Wally, now dawning his first class hairstyle, was leaving Stumpy's for the day. "Good day you frogs! See you at the ceremony." Then, he was bumped into a girl frog. "Pardon me young lady," he said. "Who're you calling young lady?" asked the girl frog.

That frog was none other than Polly Plantar. The amount of time that passed has changed Polly from a young tadpole with sprouted legs, to a fully grown frog with orange hair and newly formed fingers and toes. She was wearing mechanical overalls and wearing sports tape on her limbs due to her love for robotics. "Oh, hello Polly," said Wally. "Still can't get used to you as a frog." "Whatever Wally," said Polly as she raced into town.

In town, Tint Tormak has made a great living for himself. He decided to stay with the Plantars as his permanent home, considering they're the best adopted family he has. He has also experienced a slight growth spurt, making him a bit taller. He lost his orange fins connected to his gills, and started sprouting a fourth one at the bottom of his third. Almost making him look just like his great uncle Cronaxx. He still wore his red shirt with black pants, but now he's dawned his uncle's hat, a blue cape made of the same material Darrel used to make his cloak, and Darrel's compass wrapped around his neck.

He and Maddie recently started a business selling pan and potions together. And because of their love for magic, they started hanging out a lot to the point where they decided to get together. Maddie offered Mrs Croaker a new potion she brewed. "Here's the potion for your rheumatism, Mrs. Croaker." "But try not to drink it too- fast?" said Tint a little too late. Mrs Croaker already chugged the whole potion and she started dancing.

Tint spots Polly racing across town. "Tint, come on!" she cried. "They're about to start!" "Sweet," said Tint. "Come on Maddie, let's close up shop." "Go ahead my Fireball," said Maddie. "I'll meet you in town square." Tint nodded and followed Polly across town.

They run past Loggle, who has lost all his mass muscles after the war, trying to push something strong. "Hurry up Loggle," said Tint. "It's almost time for the unveiling," said Polly. "I never should've taken that cheat day," said Loggle, missing his massive gains.

The two run across town, just as Joe Sparrow lands with Olivia, Yunan, and Grime, who now became a Paladin. His armor was replaced with a lighter white uniform, and he started growing his beard, making him look wise. He also carries one of Sasha's swords as a remembrance. The three were greeted by the newly appointed mayor of Wartwood, Toadie.

"Hello delegates," he greeted. "You're just in time for the ceremony." Grime was most surprised, "Toadie, you won the election?" "Well I had a little help," replied Toadie. "Constituents don't bribe themselves," said Toadstool, who is now the assistant to Mayor Toadie.

Joe Sparrow greets Bessie with a flower, showing the world that they've gotten together as well. And were parents to multiple snail birds. Yunan and Olivia watch children run around, having fun. "You know I wouldn't mind settling down in a quiet swamp like this," said Olivia. "It's slow, the people are friendly," "And it's far away from the countless enemies," said Yunan.

"I made a lot when I was General Yunan! Scourge of the Sand Wars! Defeater of Ragnar the Wretched-" "I know, sweetheart," said Olivia patting her partner's back. "We all know." Yunan blushes in response to Olivia interrupting her.

Back at the Plantar farm, Hop pop started growing his own line of fresh avocados, thanks to the avocado seed Darrel gave to him. Frobo became a full time gardener, and Silvia Sundew started settling down with Hop pop.

Polly and Tint race to find Sprig, so they ask Hop pop. "Hey Hop pop. have you seen Sprig?" "It's ceremony time," said Polly. "In his

usual spot," said Hop pop. The two know what his usual spot is. So they go look for him.

Sprig, now with hair coming out of his head, and a red neckerchief around his neck, was in the basement using Anne's old phone to log in his adventure book. Since Anne left, he's been in the basement using it to plan future adventures.

"Yo Sprig," said Tint. "It's time for the unveiling ceremony. Let's go!" "Finally," said Sprig following the two. "Can't wait to see how it turned out." The three get to the unveiling ceremony on time, just as Loggle unveiled the town's newest statue of Wartwood. The statue was none other than Anne Boonchuy, sword drawn and the calamity box in hand.

Suddenly, Sprig was ambushed by his girlfriend, Ivy. "AMBUSH!" Ivy gets off Sprig and tells him the good news. "Guess what Sprig," she said. "Grime just told me they discovered a new continent! Untouched by frog, newt, toad, or salamander. Feel like a new adventure?"

Sprig smiled and looked at the statue of his departed best friend. "I'm in," said Sprig. "Count me in too," said Tint. "I'll navigate." "Don't go without me," said Maddie. The two hold hands. "Looks like we're all in," said Sprig. The four race off to discover new uncharted territory in the land of Amphibia.

Meanwhile, in the city of Los Angeles, it's ten years later after the events of what happened during the city's short term siege. A red car pulls up to the Los Angeles airport, waiting for a visitor to arrive. "Today," said the news anchor. "Marks the ten year anniversary of the event we've come to know as 'Frog-vasion'. But the real question remains: Was it all a hoax?"

Outside the Los Angeles airport, Marcy Wu, now twenty three years old, was waving to the person waiting for her. It was an adult Sasha Waybright. "Sasha!" Marcy cried. "Marc," greeted Sasha. Marcy

rushes over to hug her, but a slight mishap causes her to trip and fall flat on her face. "I'm okay," she said as she got back up.

The two were then seen driving in the streets of Los Angeles, with a couple gifts sitting in the back for someone's birthday. "Gosh it's been a minute," said Sasha. "How was the flight?" "Pretty good," replied Marcy. "Can you believe it's been ten years?" "Crazy right?" replied Sasha.

"So what have you been up to? Still doing that webcomic? I read a few chapters. It's awesome." Marcy was pleased to know that her friend was reading her webcomic. "Oh, thanks. It's doing pretty well online. And how about you? Psych degree come in handy?" "Yep," replied Sasha. "I really like working with the kids. Helping them overcome their emotional baggage. I have a lot of experience."

Suddenly, a driver changes lanes right in front of her. Causing Sasha to get angry and honk her horn. "Hey! Nice signal buddy!" Marcy chuckled in response to that outburst. "So, did you, Darrel, and Anne hang out much after I moved?"

"At first yeah," replied Sasha. "But we kinda fell into different friend groups in high school. We still talked, but only every once in a while. Darrel and Anne took a small break from their relationship before they graduated. They both wanted to open new horizons in their lives. Last I heard from Darrel was that he spent more time with his roommates in college, Ivan, Jake, Frank, and Eddie. After he graduated from college, he and Anne found each other again."

"I suppose it wouldn't have worked out between you two?" Marcy asked. "It's okay," said Sasha. "Keep telling yourself that, Mar Mar. Besides, there are plenty of people out in the world who would want to know me. Men or Women. Anyway, have you heard what they've been doing these days?" "Yes," replied Marcy. "And I love it."

At the Griffith Observatory, a fun presentation was in the process of entertaining students on a field trip. Their host was a twenty three year old man, Caucasian with brown slightly messy hair. His outfit

consists of brown pants, and a tanned shirt. He wore a purple neckerchief, and a crystal hanging from below. His name is Darrel Loyallat.

After his experience with practicing magic, he took his visual effects skills and refurbished his mind with bigger and brighter ways to make great videos. But every once in a while, he goes out to look at the stars in the sky. So to keep his spirits up, he got a job at the planetarium where he can entertain people with his visual effects and his interests in stars, constellations, nebulae, even new worlds.

"And so, ladies and gentlemen," he concluded. "If your imagination is as big as the universe, you'd be amazed to know that we're not alone on this planet." The planetarium finishes the video screening and the students applaud their host.

As the day comes to an end, Darrel proceeds to make a stop before heading home. He looks at his phone with a message from 'DungeonBuddy' "We're on our way, meet us there." Darrel smiled, knowing that Marcy has arrived. He starts his car and makes his way to where they're going to meet. On his passenger seat, was a wrapped gift made out to someone's birthday. And on his left hand shows his old grandfather's watch, and a gold band on one of his fingers.

Darrel drives to the Aquarium of the Pacific. Lucky for him, Marcy and Sasha haven't arrived yet. He pays for admission and enters the aquarium looking for a specific location. He finds his way into the exhibit called the Wonderful World of Frogs. He finds who he's looking for in the exhibit. Anne Boonchuy, twenty three years old, herpetologist, and his wife. She was wearing the traditional work shirt for the aquarium. Wore brown boots, and light brown shorts. Her hair is also tied into a ponytail with a hair tie that has leaves on them.

"A frog's environment is everything," she said to a group of elementary school students. "They love humidity." She shows them a small pink frog, and they gaze in magnificence. "This energetic fella

is a pink South American tree frog." "What's his name?" asked one of the students.

"I named him Sprig," replied Anne. "After a dear dear friend of mine." "Okay class," said the teacher. "Everyone thank Anne the herpetologist." "Thanks Frog lady," said the class as they left with their teacher.

"Hi, honey," said Darrel. Anne was most happy to see him. "How was your day at work, Darrel?" she asked. "It's great as usual," replied Darrel. "Everyday is a gift. Speaking of which." He shows his gift to Anne, making her smile. "Happy birthday, Anne." "Thanks sweetie."

The two look down at the little frog and smile. "How's Lil' Tint doing?" Darrel asked. "See for yourself," replied Anne. As she opens the display case, he finds a small fire salamander resting on top of a branch. Darrel smiled and touched his crystal and neckerchief.

As Anne closed the door, the two could see in the reflection of their childhood friends. Sasha and Marcy waved to two love birds and the four were happily reunited. They all leave the aquarium to spend the rest of Anne's birthday together.

While spending the day, Darrel thinks back to all he's done in Amphibia. Of course the adventure was over, but he couldn't help but smile at all he's accomplished on his own. Thanks to the adventure in Amphibia, he wouldn't be where he is today. A great friend, a great husband, a great man.

Just goes to show, change can be difficult. But that's how people grow. It can be the hardest thing, to realize you can't hold onto something forever. Sometimes, you have to let it go. But of the things you let go, you'd be surprised what makes it way back to you. That's the one thing that will never change: Loyalty. Loyalty works in many ways, and they can coexist not just in our world. Loyalty can live Among other Worlds.

-THE END

-Keep on Truckin'